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PLUCK AND LUCK

FRED THE FOUNDRY BOY OR FIGHTING THE IRON KINGS

By Richard R. Montgomery
AND OTHER STORIES



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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

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Fred, the Foundry Boy

OR,

FIGHTING THE IRON KINGS

By RICHARD R. MONTGOMERY

CHAPTER I.

THE STRIKE AT THE IRON WORKS.

"Then you won't join us, Fred?"

"No, Pete, I don't think I will."

"You had better think twice about it. We'll make it hot for you if you don't."

"There is no need for me to think twice about it. I have given the matter all the thought that is necessary."

"And you have positively decided not to join?"

"That's the size of it."

"But why? Isn't it a fellow's duty to stand by his friends in time of trouble?"

"I think it is. I propose to stand by my friends, and the best friend I've got is the best friend any fellow ever had—his mother. If I join in this strike my mother will have to go out to work to support me and my two sisters. I won't have that, Pete Taylor, not so long as I can work with my two hands."

"Pshaw! You're a regular mollycoddle, Fred French."

"It may be."

"We mean to fight these iron kings to the bitter end. They have oppressed us long enough. The iron business was never so good as it is at present, and now is our time to put the bosses in a hole when the shop is full of orders and everything is booming, don't you see?"

Fred, who was busy shoveling moulding sand into his wheelbarrow, leaned on his shovel and looked the young Pollack, who went by the name of Pete Taylor in the Welby Iron Works, straight in the eyes.

"See here, Pete," he said, "this strike seems to me altogether a one-sided affair. You are a moulder; you have a floor in this foundry, and you are striking for a ten per cent. rise in pay, but I am only a helper, and when you moulders come to settle up your difference with the iron kings, we helpers won't be in it. We won't be considered at all, as you know very well, and after losing our wages for a week or a month, or six months, as the case may be, it will wind up in our going back to work at the same old pay, so I would like to know where the advantage to us is coming in?"

"Advantage! Why, you will have been true to your friends. You will have helped to down the iron kings."

"It strikes me," said Fred, slowly, that there are iron kings among you moulders, who draw all the way from four to eight dollars a day, just as well as among the bosses, for you want to rule us all, and to force us foundry boys to be out of pocket a whole lot of good dollars, just because you want to make a point which won't do us one bit of good."

It was sound common sense that Fred, the foundry boy, was talking, and Pete Taylor knew it, and probably that was what made him angry.

He turned roughly on Fred and, shaking his fist in his face, hissed:

"Look out for yourself, Fred French! If you stay in while the rest of us go out, we'll kill you—that's all!"

Having relieved himself of that cheerful remark, Pete Taylor walked off into another part of the big building, leaving Fred, the foundry boy, to resume his shoveling in anything but a pleasant frame of mind.

There was trouble brewing in Welby, which, with its near neighbor, Darlington, formed one of a pair of the liveliest foundry towns in western Pennsylvania.

For a long time business had been very dull, and the iron workers were deprived of everything which went to make life comfortable, some being even reduced almost to the verge of starvation, and now, just as everything was improving and there was work enough for all, the iron kings of the labor union had decreed this strike against those other iron kings, as they called their bosses, demanding a sharp increase in pay.

As for the merits of the quarrel, we know nothing about the matter, and it does not at all concern our story, but one thing must be mentioned, and that is that for a long time there had been great dissatisfaction among the iron workers against the leaders of their local union, who held sway over them by a small majority of votes in the lodge.

By a majority of one this strike had been ordered, and thus it will be seen that there were as many against it as there were for it.

Fred and the other boys who were helpers on the "floor" were not members of the union, but were allowed to work under certain restrictions, and by the payment of certain dues.

Sharp, shrewd, enterprising and a most persistent worker, Fred French failed utterly to see why his bread and butter should be taken away from him to help certain men already

FRED, THE FOUNDRY BOY.

well paid for their labor to be better paid still, and he had about made up his mind not to join in the strike provided any one else remained loyal to the Welby Iron Works. But if, on the other hand, every one went out, of course he would have to go, too.

The day wore on, and the big foundry bell rang at five o'clock to dismiss the men.

The Pollacks and Hungarians, with black faces and dinner-pails in their hands, went trooping to their homes in the lower road, leaving Fred French and his friend, Tom Daley, to trudge along the main road to Darlington, for they lived in the upper part of the town.

"Do the Darlington fellows go out, too, Fred?" asked Tom, as they walked along, dodging the bicycles of the foundrymen, who, like themselves, lived up the road, as best they could.

"That's what I understand, Tom."

"I heard different. I was told that they had decided to pull away from the union and not go out."

"It wouldn't surprise me. There's lots of work over in Darlington, and John Dathan treats his men well. You know they all come in for a share of the profits at the end of the year."

"And yet John Dathan is one of the most hated iron kings."

"I know it. Some say he's a good man, and others that he is as mean as mud. I'm sure I don't know which is true."

"You are going out, Tom, I suppose?"

"I've got to, Fred. Can't help myself. Pete Taylor told me that he'd kill me if I didn't."

"I don't know which is the biggest tyrant, Pete Taylor or Moses Markham," muttered Fred.

"I know which one of the iron kings I hate the worst, and that is Mat Markham," said Tom, spitefully. "If I thought it would do him any harm I'd stay at work, even if Pete was to take it out of my hide every day in the week, that's what I would."

"What, is he still bothering Dora?" asked Fred, interested all at once.

"That's what he is! I'd like to break his head for him."

"So would I," said Fred, quickly. "The impudent puppy! Mebbe I'll do it some day. If I do go on the strike it will be on Mat Markham's account."

The boys separated at the railroad bridge, for Tom lived off on the south side, while Fred's road took him along Welby's main street. He was just coming to it now, and as he walked on he saw Mat Markham's handsome turnout standing in front of Grossman's saloon.

Now, Mat Markham certainly deserved the hatred and contempt of the foundry boys.

He was the son of old Moses Markham, Welby's iron king, who had risen from the foundry floor to be the owner of one of the most prosperous iron plants in the State. People said that Moses was mean and close-fisted, but it was certain that his son was not following in his footsteps, for although he was not much older than Fred and Tom, and that was only eighteen, he had already attained the reputation of being a "high roller," and instead of sticking to business at the foundry office, where he was supposed to have work to do, he was always flying about town, drinking, playing poker, ogling the girls, and, in short, neglecting his business and running wild.

No wonder Tom Daley resented the attention which this young man persisted in paying his sister, and less wonder still that Fred, who was decidedly fond of Dora Daley on his own account, should feel toward his boss' son in the way he did.

And now, while Fred was debating in his mind about the strike, something happened which unsettled his mind on the one hand and settled it on the other, and it all came about through the coincidence of Dora Daley happening to come out

of the millinery store where she was employed at the same moment that Mat Markham came out of the saloon next door.

"Ah, Miss Dora, I am just in time!" exclaimed Mat, rather thickly, for he had been interviewing "John Barleycorn" in the saloon. "I'm going your way. Let me help you into my buggy. It's just as cheap to ride as it is to walk."

Pretty Dora Daley's eyes flashed fire.

"I don't know you, sir," she said, in a tone which should have been enough for any gentleman in the least degree worthy of the name.

"Don't know me! Now, come, that's pretty good!" cried Mat, placing himself in front of the girl. "Didn't we go to school together? Don't be a goose, Dora. Jump right in, my dear, or you'll find there'll be trouble down at the foundry for Tom."

"You coward! Don't you dare to lay your hands on me!" Dora cried, for Mat had emphasized his threat by taking hold of the girl's arm.

"You will get into that buggy, or I'll know the reason why!" cried Mat, with drunken persistency, at the same time throwing his arm about Dora's waist and trying to drag her toward the curb.

"That's the reason why, Mat Markham!" exclaimed a voice behind him, and then it was whack! whack! when the dinner-pail of Fred, the foundry boy, came crashing down upon Mat Markham's head.

CHAPTER II.

FRED STRIKES OUT FOR HIMSELF.

Fred, the foundry boy, had made up his mind to go on the strike and join in the fight against the iron kings.

Indeed, he had already struck, and pretty hard, too, and he was ready to fight this particular iron king by fair means or foul.

And Fred's strike proved effectual, for he struck so hard that he mashed the masher's hat in and sent Mat Markham tumbling over against the hind wheel of the buggy.

The horse started then, and that finished the business for the masher, for he landed on his back in the gutter, which happened to be full of mud.

"Oh, thank you, Fred! Thank you a thousand times!" exclaimed Dora, grasping Fred's arm convulsively. "Oh, that fellow has annoyed me so for the last two weeks!"

"He'll never annoy you again if I can help it, Dora," said Fred, as they walked away together. "I'll see you home. He may take a notion to follow, and make trouble. He had better look out for himself if he does, though."

It was Fred himself who had need to look out.

Mat Markham was one of the sly kind, always ready for any mean revenge.

Already he had made up his mind to have Fred discharged from the foundry, never guessing of what was in the wind, but that did not satisfy him, and he immediately set out to get in his revenge, then and there.

Scrambling up, wild with rage, and plastered with mud from head to foot, he leaped into his buggy, seized the whip and started the horse down Main street, keeping the buggy close to the curb.

Fred heard the team coming up behind him, of course, but as there were many other teams on the street, he did not look back, and was consequently taken completely by surprise when the whip came down over his head and shoulders.

"Take that, and that, you young cub!" roared Mat, and Dora got some of it, too, before Fred could turn, grab the whip and wrench it away.

Mat got his dose then, and the horse, taking fright, ran down Main street like mad, giving the iron king's son all he could do to keep from being thrown into the street.

Fred broke the whip in two, and, throwing the pieces after the rapidly retreating buggy, went home with Dora Daley.

His mind was made up now.

Mat Markham's whip had done what Pete Taylor's arguments could not do.

The next day Fred French joined with his fellow workmen, who, at twelve o'clock, marched out of the Welby Iron Works in a body.

The great fight against the iron kings had fairly begun, and by the next day it had made big headway, for the men of the Dathan foundry at Darlington struck, too, and half a dozen other iron works were closed up there.

For the next few weeks it was hard times in Welby; the workmen suffered and the storekeepers suffered, but the greatest sufferers were the women, who had to turn to and support a great band of idle men.

Mrs. French was an exception. Fred saw to that. He went right to work at anything he could find to do. He helped the grocer carry out goods on Saturdays, he did garden work and helped Green, the painter, four or five days, and in fact, he did so well in the matter of money that he began to think that whichever way the strike went he would hardly care to go back to the foundry again, and work in the heat for six dollars a week.

Meanwhile, there were labor meetings and processions, and threats to blow up the foundries, and all the usual troubles which go hand-in-hand with strikes, for the iron kings had met and resolved simply to do nothing.

Five months passed, and from a strike the trouble had become practically a lockout. Business in Welby and Darlington had simply stopped, and such was the situation on a certain afternoon when there was a big procession of the striking foundrymen, who hoped to arouse the sympathy of the people by parading through the street of Welby carrying flags and beating drums, and displaying banners bearing such devices as: "Our cause is just," "We will fight it out to the last!" "Down with the iron kings!" etc.

Fred was not in the procession. He had no time to waste in such foolishness, for he was working for Mr. Stubbs, the grocer, that week.

He had driven away out on the Darlington road to deliver goods, when he suddenly met the procession wheeling out of a cross-road which led over to another town, where there was a small foundry.

Fred had not heard them coming, for the drums did not begin to beat until the head of the procession turned the corner, and then starting up full force, the grocer's horse shied and went dashing into a pretty little pony phaeton which was being driven by a young lady who was in the act of passing the wagon when the horse jumped.

There was trouble for Fred all in a minute.

Off came the wheel of the phaeton and the young lady fell to the ground, and, her skirts catching, she was being dragged when Fred at the risk of his life sprang from the wagon, and, leaving his horse to go dashing down the Darlington road, caught the other horse by the bridle and brought it to a standstill, while the procession went filing around the corner with the drums still beating and not one of the strikers man enough to break ranks and lend Fred a helping hand.

The horse was a steady creature, however, and Fred soon had it quieted, and was able to go to the assistance of the young lady. Unhitching her skirts, he helped her to rise as the last of the procession came around the corner and moved down the Welby road.

"Are you hurt, miss?" asked Fred, anxiously. "I'm afraid it was all my fault."

"Why, I'm not hurt at all," replied the girl, "and I don't blame you a bit. I should not have tried to pass you. How can I ever thank you enough for saving my life? I should certainly have been killed if you had not acted as promptly as you did."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Fred. "What I did was nothing; the question is, what can I do for you now? You seem to be in a bad box."

"But you are in a worse one. You have lost your wagon."

"It isn't mine; it belongs to Mr. Stubbs, the grocer."

"And its loss will make you a lot of trouble, I daresay. My name is Lena Cranford. Probably you know my father by reputation. He is John Cranford. We live next to Mr. Dathan's house, on the Darlington road."

Know him! How could Fred help knowing him! Here he was, up against another iron king, but this time a retired one, for Mr. Cranford had long been out of the iron business, and had the reputation of being one of the wealthiest men in that section of the State.

It was now getting on toward dusk, and Fred was considerably puzzled to know what to do with the wreck of the phaeton and the young lady, who had been so unexpectedly thrown upon his protection, when all at once, to his great joy, he saw his own horse come trotting toward him drawing the grocery wagon behind it unharmed.

"We are all right now, miss!" he exclaimed. "That old nag of ours knows altogether too much to run far in the opposite direction from the stable. Here he comes. We'll hitch your horse on behind and I'll drive you home."

"Oh, I should be so much obliged to you if you would," said Miss Cranford. "Would it be much out of your way?"

"It will be all out of my way beyond the next house," laughed Fred, "but that don't matter. It isn't more than three miles over to your place, anyhow, and as there is a thunder-storm coming up sure, the least I can do is to get you home in time to escape a wetting, and if we are quick I think we can manage that."

So Fred stepped out into the road and stopped his horse, little dreaming into what this adventure was to lead him before the grocer's nag saw the inside of his stable again.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT THE CART THAT WENT OFF THE "HORSEBACK."

Fred reached Mr. Cranford's elegant mansion before the storm came on, and, take it altogether, he had one of the most enjoyable rides of his life, for he found the young lady a most agreeable companion.

In fact, before he reached the end of his journey he had arrived at the conclusion that Lena Cranford was just about the nicest young lady he had ever met in his life.

"You must come right in and see my father, Fred," said Miss Lena, for she had already become quite familiar with the foundry boy.

"Oh, no, I couldn't think of it!" replied Fred. "I'm away behind my time now, and I must get right back to the store, or Mr. Stubbs will be worried to death about the horse."

"Well, then you must come some other time. Father will want to see you and thank you for what you have done for me."

"I'll see about that," replied Fred, and, turning the horse, which had been hitched on behind the wagon, over to a young

man who now came out through the gate to their assistance, he started back over the Welby road at full speed.

He had not gone far before the storm broke, and a very severe one it proved to be.

The thunder was the loudest Fred remembered hearing in many years, and the flashes of lightning were blinding and incessant, while rain seemed to come down in one solid sheet, drenching Fred to the skin and dashing in his face with such violence that he could scarcely see where to drive.

Fred had now come to a dangerous part of the road—dangerous, that is, on such a night as this.

It was what they call out in that part of the country a "horseback," which means a natural causeway running through a deep hollow, a geological formation which, by the way, is rather rare.

On one side of the horseback was a swamp; on the other, a thick mass of tangled brush, and the height of the elevation on either side was about forty feet.

Right at the end of the horseback, that is, the end toward Welby, and farthest away from Fred as he drove on to the causeway, there was an inclined road leading down into the swamp which had been made by the peat-cutters, for some of the Pollacks and Hungarians who worked in the foundries preferred that primitive kind of fuel to coal.

Just as Fred drove on to the horseback he perceived a cart ahead of him which seemed to be pretty well loaded down. It was drawn by a single horse, and Fred, who caught sight of it during the brief interval of one of the lightning flashes, saw the driver suddenly fall off the seat and tumble into the road.

"By gracious, that fellow has been struck by lightning!" gasped Fred, urging his horse on.

A terrific crash of thunder immediately followed, and Fred could hear the cart rumbling ahead of him in such a way as told him that the horse was on the run.

Before he could reach the spot where the man had fallen there came another flash, and Fred saw the cart go tumbling off the horseback on the left down into the swamp.

Instantly there was a loud explosion which must have been heard for miles around.

All was still for an instant, and then a moment later Fred heard men shouting down in the swamp.

What did it all mean?"

Fred had no time to think. It was all he could do to hold in his own horse and keep from going off the horseback himself.

He did it, though, and in a moment reached the spot where the man who had fallen off his wagon was just trying to pick himself up.

The lightning which had struck the fellow was the sort which is popularly called "Jersey lightning"; in short, the cart driver was simply very drunk.

"Hey! Hey! Stop! Where is it? Where'd it go?" he muttered, staggering over to the wagon.

"Pete Taylor!" cried Fred, recognizing the striking iron moulder.

"Zat you, Fred French?" stammered Pete. "Shay, where's my cart?"

"Your cart went off the horseback, and is down in the swamp now," retorted Fred, puzzled to know what it all meant.

"Down in the swamp! Did it tumble down? Good grief, we shall be all blown to blazes when she strikes!"

Before Fred had time to reply he saw a lantern flashing ahead of him, and four men, wearing black masks over the lower part of their faces, came hurrying up.

"You drunken idiot!" hissed one, rushing up to Pete Taylor and giving him a savage kick. "This is the way you do your

work, sending good money to blazes and alarming the whole neighborhood. You ought to be blown up yourself!"

At the same time another of the four seized the horse's head and another still sprang upon the wagon and, thrusting a revolver into Fred's face, exclaimed:

"We want your team, young fellow, and we are going to kill you to get it if necessary—see?"

"I see, Bat Goshinsky," replied Fred, with a degree of coolness which surprised himself, for he recognized one of the leaders of the striking foundrymen, a perfect giant, who stood six feet four, and was stout in proportion; a man to be feared under all circumstances, and particularly so in a case like this.

"Fred! Is that you, then?" cried Bat. "Ha! I see! This is Mr. Stubbs' team."

"That's what it is."

"Where have you been?"

"Over to Darlington."

"Good enough! You have happened along just in time. You haven't done anything to help us fellows along that I've heard of yet, my boy, so now is a good chance to show what you are made of in this fight of ours against the iron kings. Jump in, boys! Tumble Pete in behind. By thunder, I've a good mind to drown him in the swamp! What do you mean, you idiot, by getting drunk when we have such business on hand as we have to-night?"

"'Tain't my fault. I didn't drink nothing, I'm sick," growled Pete, and then they went at each other in jaw-breaking Polish words, which Fred could not understand, of course, but he did fully understand that he was in the hands of the very worst element of the strikers, and that they had taken possession of Mr. Stubbs' wagon, and that Bat Goshinsky, having taken the reins out of his hands, was now driving the horse down into the swamp.

"Is the horse dead?" asked Pete, in English. He was lying in the bottom of the wagon now, and getting a good shaking up as the wagon rattled down the steep incline.

"Both forelegs broken," growled Bat. "I wish yours were, you blame fool."

"Is the dynamite all gone?"

"One box is gone, the rest is all right and ready for business," snarled Bat. "By thunder, I wish you had been sitting on top of the case that went up."

Fred's heart sank.

He understood it all now.

He had heard rumors that the strikers meant to blow up the Welby Iron Works.

Was he to be made a party to this terrible crime?

It certainly looked so, for Bat Goshinsky turned to him and said:

"Now, Freddy, you will be given a chance to do something for your country to-night. We are going to blow a hundred thousand dollars out of old Markham's pocket. This is only the beginning of our fight against the iron kings."

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE HANDS OF THE DYNAMITERS.

Fred French knew too much altogether to try to "buck against" Mr. Bat Goshinsky.

The big Pollack was ignorant, brutal, quarrelsome and a dangerous man in every sense of the word.

It might be possible to escape him by some clever stratagem, but certainly it was no use to turn openly against him now.

Therefore, Fred said nothing, but just allowed Bat and his companions to do as they pleased.

"You see, we were waiting here for Pete," exclaimed the foundryman. "We were standing under the big tree there on ahead, when we heard the cart coming. Blame it all, you had just ought to seen us scoot out of the way when we heard the wagon coming down over the bank!"

"I should think so," said Fred. "It's a wonder you weren't all killed."

"That's what's the matter. It is a wonder."

"Don't see what saved the horse from being blown to bits."

"Well, it's because the force of the explosion was the other way," said Bat. "I don't altogether understand it myself, but there the poor brute lies with both legs broken and nothing worse, and the wagon isn't hurt at all."

"I don't understand it yet," said Fred. "You say there were half a dozen cases of dynamite in the wagon. Why didn't they all go off? It beats me."

But Fred understood it better when he got down to the scene of the wreck.

One of the cases had fallen out of the wagon and struck on the edge of the horseback.

This was the case that had exploded.

The wagon itself with the other cases landed in the swamp, and this was what had saved them.

Fred took in all this at a glance, while Bat and the others were climbing down, still railing away at Pete Taylor, who had already fallen asleep in the bottom of the wagon, and was too drunk to know or care what was being said.

"Turn your wagon around, Fred," said Bat. "We want to load these other cases in."

"Say, have I got to go into this thing, Bat Goshinsky?" demanded Fred. "We'll all land in jail."

"Got to go into it!" cried Bat. "Of course you have got to go into it! Aren't you one of us, Fred French?"

"I don't know whether I am or not," replied Fred, boldly. "Anyhow, I don't believe in murder and arson, and that's what you are up to, Bat Goshinsky."

"There'll be murder done right here and now if you don't do what I say!" hissed the foundryman, drawing his revolver and thrusting it into Fred's face.

Of course, Fred did not do any arguing after that.

It would have been mere folly to attempt it.

He was terribly worried, though, not only on his own account but about Mr. Stubbs' horse and wagon, for the grocer was a poor man, and had hard work to make it go, and if anything happened to the team Fred knew just what trouble there would be.

He turned around as ordered, and sat there holding the horse and watching the strikers at their work.

"I'll shoot the horse, I guess," said Bat.

"You had better," added Basil Rosensky, another of the strikers. "We can't move it out of here, so all we can do is to leave it where it is."

"Who does it belong to?" demanded Fred, who was a pretty good talker, and always found it hard to keep his tongue still.

"None of your business," retorted Bat. "You've got as much as you can do to look after Stubbs' horse when we get through with it; in the meantime, Freddy, if you don't want to get too deeply mixed up in this business I advise you to hold your tongue."

Fred took the hint, and said no more.

Then Bat and Basil fished the cases of dynamite out of the swamp and loaded them into the wagon.

This done, Bat put his revolver to the fallen horse's forehead and shot the poor brute; then all climbed into the wagon, and Fred was ordered to drive up on the horseback again.

It was still raining in torrents, but the thunder and lightning had ceased.

"Drive up the old mines road, Fred," said Bat. "You know where we live."

Fred knew only too well, and he did not relish the idea of going into "Huntown," as the foreign settlement on the old mines road was called.

There was no help for it, however.

But Goshinsky was boss, and Fred was forced to drive to the foundryman's cabin, put the horse in his stable, and sit for six hours in a close, stuffy room watching Bat and his friends while they smoked their pipes and drank beer and jabbered away in their jaw-breaking jargon.

By the time midnight came Fred was nervous enough to jump out of his skin, but there was no relief in sight yet.

Fred sat in the corner on a stool when the clock struck twelve, apparently half asleep, but actually wide-awake and revolving in his mind all sorts of plots and plans, when Bat, suddenly breaking off in his conversation, turned on the boy and ordered him out to the barn.

Here the horse was harnessed again, and a few moments later Fred was driving toward Welby, with Bat crowding him on one side and Basil on the other.

They rattled down the Welby road until they had almost reached town, and then by Bat's orders turned aside and, crossing the railroad bridge, came to the old wood road which ran behind the iron works, where they turned in and, to Bat's intense satisfaction, the whole journey was performed without meeting a soul.

"Nothing could have been better," chukled Bat. "Now, Freddy, we are right up against this business, and let me say one or two words to you."

Fred was wet and cold. His teeth were chattering, and he was shaking all over, but this was from the cold and not through fear.

Frightened he surely was, there is no denying it, but he was still firmly resolved to head off the schemes of these men if it was a possible thing to do.

"I'm listening to you, Bat," he replied. "What is it you want to say?"

"Just that I mean to kill you, Fred French, if you ever dare to give away this night's work!"

"Well, I hear you."

"Look out that you heed, then."

"What is it that you mean to do? If you blow up the works, won't that throw everybody out for a year to come?"

"You fool! You don't understand. It is not our side of the works we are going to blow up. It's the soft shop. How will that affect us? Why, it will show old Markham that it isn't going to pay to keep this thing up any longer. It will bring the strike to a finish, and we shall all be at work again inside of a week."

"Yes, but how about the sixty odd men who work in the soft-shop? Where do they come in?"

"Come in? They don't come in at all; they stay out," retorted Bat. "What are their affairs to us? Out with you, now, Fred, and help us unload, and remember what I tell you, boy."

"He means to kill me, anyhow," flashed through Fred's mind. "He will never let me go back to Stubbs with the wagon. Oh, what shall I do?"

He was entirely right.

If Bat Goshinsky's mind had been an open book, Fred, the foundry boy, could not have read it more clearly.

His life was worse than in danger. If the plans of the two Pollacks were carried out to a finish, Fred was doomed, for the intention was to make him fire the train and then kill him and throw his body into the creek.

CHAPTER V.

BLOWING UP THE SOFT-SHOP.

Fred realized fully the dangerous ground upon which he stood.

He felt that there was but one course for him to take, and that was to seem to yield and watch for his chance to head the plotters off and be ready to take it when it came.

The horse was hitched to a tree and the wagon unloaded.

The boxes of dynamite, five in number, were carried into the woods, deposited in a little hollow and covered with leaves and branches, all but one, and that was left near the wagon, hidden among the bushes.

It had stopped raining by this time, and the moon was out, which gave the plotters plenty of light for their evil work.

"How about the watchman and the two Pinkerton men who are guarding the foundry?" asked Fred, as they stood looking through the trees at the irregular mass of buildings just beyond, all silent and dark now, save for a solitary light in the engine-house, where a guard was supposed to be kept night and day.

"Drunk, all three of them," replied Bat. "The boys have attended to that."

"All the same, you had better make sure," added Basil. "Get down there, Bat, and see how the land lies."

There was some discussion about this.

Bat consented to go at last, and Basil and Fred stood watching as he strode in among the buildings toward the solitary light.

He was back again in a few moments.

"All three drunk and asleep in the engine-room," was the report. "The coast is clear."

"That's the talk," said Basil. "Shall we move now?"

"As well now as any time. Pick up that box and carry it over behind the soft-shop, Freddy. You know what will happen to us if you let it fall."

The box, which was filled with dynamite cartridges, was by no means heavy, but Fred's heart was in his mouth as he walked with it through the foundry yard.

They passed in behind the soft-shop, which was a long, low building, Bat stopping Fred at a place where there was a hole in the foundation wall; the building had no cellar, but stood upon this low foundation raised about three feet off the ground.

The box was now opened, and Bat taking out one of the cartridges, proceeded to put in the cap and attach the fuse.

Then crawling in under the building, he had Basil push the box in after him, the intention being to place it under the middle of the building where the force of the explosion would be most felt.

What part it was intended that Fred should take in these villainous proceedings he never knew.

His chance had come, and he took it.

It seemed as if Basil had forgotten that the boy was there against his will, for he stooped down and turned his back on Fred, and when he straightened up again Fred was not there, but was running for all he was worth.

"Come back, you young imp! Come back, or I'll fire!" called Basil, in a hoarse whisper.

"He'll never fire!" thought Fred, as he dashed around the corner of the building.

And he was right.

No shot came. Fred lost no time, but went bounding through the foundry yard.

He hardly expected to stop the explosion.

If Bat and Basil kept on with their work there was no time for that.

What he did hope to do was to reach the fire-engine house on the other road.

Next door to the engine-house the chief lived, and Fred's hastily formed plan was to wake him up and clear his own skirts by telling all.

There was just a chance, too, that something would go wrong, and he might be in time to save the soft-shop, but this was almost too much to hope.

Everything went entirely different from what he had planned, however, for before he was half across the yard Fred ran straight into the arms of two men who came suddenly around the corner of the office building.

It was Mat Markman and a man whom Fred did not know.

"By thunder! here's one of the blamed strikers now!" cried Mat, seizing Fred by the shoulders.

"Great Scott! Why, it's Fred French!" he added. "You young fiend! What are you doing around here at this time of night?"

"Hold him, Mat!" cried the other man, as Fred kicked and struggled.

"Let go of me! Let go of me!" cried Fred. "They are trying to blow up the soft-shop! I was going to the engine-house to give the alarm!"

"What! What!" shouted Mat, and then the other man seized Fred by the throat.

"We have no time to lose!" he cried. "This way, Markham. You young wretch! If you don't come along quietly I'll choke the life out of you. Oh! Ah! Catch him! Don't let him escape!"

Half wild with pain and excitement, Fred tore the man's hand from his throat, lowered his head and butted him in the stomach, and then, pulling away, went bounding on down the foundry road.

It was the mistake of a lifetime.

The man was a Pinkerton detective come to look after the interests of the Markhams.

From that moment Fred French was to be hunted from pillar to post, not only by the detective, but by the strikers themselves.

Mat Markham rushed after him, followed by the detective, but Fred was altogether too good a runner to be overtaken by these two men.

He was out of the foundry yard in a moment, and then before he could get up the hill the stillness of the night was broken by a fearful explosion, which aroused the whole town from its slumbers.

It was the soft-shop, of course.

The long, low building was a hopeless wreck, the entire center of it being blown out.

Three shots came flying after Fred as he ran, but all missed him.

He looked back, and there was the detective still following, running like a deer.

"You'll stop or I'll kill you!" he shouted, firing again.

But instead of stopping Fred dodged down an alley and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHASE BEGINS.

Fred French was in a bad fix, and no mistake.

Every man among the worst element of the strikers would be down on him from that moment, and he knew them well enough to feel sure that they would kill him if they could.

If they did not get him one way they would another, and if they succeeded he would not be the first man to be found

FRED, THE FOUNDRY BOY.

mysteriously murdered by these iron kings of foundrymen, who in a time like the present were a law unto themselves.

On the other hand, there were the other iron kings, the Markhams and the Dathans of Darlington, and the owners of the other foundries in the region.

What mercy had the flying boy to expect from them? None whatever.

Here was one of their hired sleuths chasing him now, popping away at him with a pistol, and ready to shoot him down like a dog.

It was death either way you looked at it.

Fred knew that there was but one course open to him, and that was to get out of town just as quick as possible.

He could not even think of going home to bid his mother and sisters good-by, for there, first of all, the police would look for him. It was a bad state of affairs all around.

Meanwhile, the great crowd of people came flocking out of the houses, many of them only half dressed.

All Welby was up and at it inside of ten minutes, and the foundry yard was filled with a wild-eyed, yelling mob.

Mat Markham did not wait to see them come.

He followed the detective, who was a man by the name of Ropes.

They met in the alley, for Mat heard the shots and saw Ropes run that way.

"Have you got him?" he shouted. "By heavens, the whole shop is blown to blazes! I'll give a thousand dollars for the arrest of that boy."

"No, I haven't got him, and I don't know where he went," panted the detective; "over one of these fences, I suppose."

"Confound it all, that's too bad, but we must get him—there must be no mistake about it. He is the one who did the job. I warned my father against that fellow weeks ago."

"Take it cool, Mr. Markham," said the detective. "We won't accomplish anything by losing our heads."

"What's the use in talking about taking it cool, when half the foundry has been destroyed by that wretch?"

"Wait! I don't feel so sure that he did it. The boy was trying to tell us something. We ought to have listened. We made a big mistake."

This was the beginning of an argument, and while it was going on Fred lay panting on the ground on the other side of one of the back fences. In climbing over he had slipped and fallen, striking his head and almost knocking the senses out of him for the time being, and he lay there now not daring to move.

The alley ran between a double row of houses, all occupied by foundrymen.

Lights were flashing in the windows, and the occupants of these tenements were hurrying out of their front doors to join their neighbors at the scene of the disaster. Fred's only chance was to get into the house behind which he lay, and, passing out in front, try and lose himself in the crowd.

He got on his feet and staggered toward the back door.

Of course, it was fastened. There was nothing for it but to knock.

He knocked several times before there was any answer, and then to his intense surprise who should open the door but Dora Daley, who stood there flashing a lighted lamp in the boy's face.

"Fred! Is it you?" she exclaimed. "What is the matter? Didn't you hear the explosion? They say the foundry has been blown up. Tom has just gone down."

"Dora! What in the world brings you here?"

"Why, we moved here last week," replied Dora. "We could not stand the rent in the cottage, now that neither Tom nor father are working."

"I'm coming in, Dora," said Fred, slipping into the hall

and closing the door behind him. "They are after me! Bolt the door! I'm lost if that man lays his hands on me. He fired four shots, too. Didn't you hear?"

"I heard the shots, yes. Who is that's chasing you, Fred?"

"Mat Markham and another man—I think he is a detective. Oh, Dora, I'm in a bad fix!"

They had passed into the room now, and Dora, placing the lantern on the table, stood facing Fred, looking very much alarmed.

The room was rather a large one, considering the size of the house. Indeed, it occupied the entire ground floor on this side of the hall. On the other side were two rooms; it was in this peculiar style that all the cottages were arranged.

"Is the door open in front, Dora?" gasped Fred.

"No; I bolted it after Tom and father went out. Oh, Fred, what is all this? It wasn't you that—that—"

"Blew the foundry up, Dora? Say it, if you mean it. But I didn't think you would suspect me of such a crime."

"No, no, Fred!"

"The thought was in your mind, though! No, I did not blow up the foundry, but I'm charged with it, just the same. It is almost enough to make a fellow wish that he had the game as well as the name, but I'm not guilty, Dora—oh, no!"

"And the detectives are chasing you?"

"Yes, they may be here any moment. Dora, I was captured by the strikers; they made me help them, and—what noise was that?"

"Somebody in the street. Everybody is running to the foundry."

"I thought I heard some one in the back yard. They can't see in, can they? No; I see the shutters are closed."

"It's all right. It's nothing," said Dora. "Fred, who were they? Who did this terrible thing?"

"Don't ask me. I dare not tell. Oh, Dora, don't you see the fix I am in? The strikers will kill me sure, because I broke away from them and ran straight into the arms of Mat Markham. Mat believes I caused the explosion, and he will never rest until I am hunted down."

"You have got to leave town, Fred. There is no help for it that I can see. Oh, I wish Tom was here!"

"So do I, for he could help me. You will go to my house and explain to mother how it was, Dora. Let Tom go to Mr. Stubbs and tell him, too. Tell him that I couldn't help myself, and that the horse and wagon are in the woods back of the shop and that there is dynamite—"

"Oh, Fred! There is some one in the yard!" broke in Dora. "There is some one at the window trying to open the shutters now!"

"It's the detective!" gasped Fred. "I must fly!"

He ran to the door, but it was locked, and Tom Daley had taken away the key.

Springing to the window, he threw up the sash, and was in the act of crawling out when the back window flew up and a man, with a cocked revolver in his hand, looked in.

"Out of the way, girl!" he shouted.

The revolver cracked then, and the shot flew the length of the room toward the escaping boy.

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTURED BY THE DETECTIVE.

If Fred French had stopped to tell long stories in Dora Daley's room he undoubtedly would have been a dead boy inside of a few seconds.

FRED, THE FOUNDRY BOY.

The man who looked in through the window was Detective Ropes, a man who held human life very cheap.

Mat Markham said: "Kill him if you catch him!" and Ropes actually set out to do it, but, after all, the shots missed and Fred tumbled out of the front window and speedily lost himself in the darkness.

Poor Dora had a hard time of it after that, for Mat Markham came in through the rear window as Detective Ropes went out the front.

If Fred had remained there no doubt the young iron king would have felt the weight of the boy's strong arm a second time, but Fred was far away by this time, and taking fresh risks, for it was not Fred's style to think only of himself; he had a number of other things on his mind.

There were his mother and sisters.

There was the horse and wagon in the woods, if, indeed, they were there still.

The foundry had gone afire somewhere in the midst of the wreck, and the engines, the police and an immense crowd of strikers and others were down in the yard.

Perhaps, after all, the best thing Fred could have done to lose himself would have been to go right down among them, but his mind was made up to return the horse and wagon to Mr. Stubbs first of all.

So he ran across the road, skimmed along in the shadow of the houses, and dodging around the edge of the crowd, managed to get into the woods behind the foundry without being seen by the detective.

Others who knew the boy saw him, but Fred paid no attention to them, and to his intense satisfaction he saw the horse still hitched to the tree where he had left it.

By this time his plan was fully formed.

"I'm going to light out and go to Pittsburg," he determined. "There's no room for me in Welby any longer, that's certain, but I won't go till I've said good-by to mother and the girls, and I won't go till I've taken the team back to Mr. Stubbs."

He had got to fight for it to carry out his plan, however; he soon found that out, for as he was in the act of unhitching the horse he heard Bat Goshinsky's hated voice say behind him:

"Hello, Freddy! Going to run away with the team, are you? By thunder, I've got you now, you young traitor! That's the way you go back on us! Boy, I mean to kill you!"

Bat Goshinsky stood within ten paces of him, with his revolver drawn, and the light of the burning building made everything plain around them.

That Fred was scared there is no denying; in fact, he was so badly scared that he scarcely knew what he did, and his memory of the occurrences of the next few moments was rather misty later on.

He remembered hearing the revolver crack, and feeling the bullet nip him on the left ear; then the next he remembered he had the whip in his hand and was laying it over the big Pollack with a will.

Bat tried to snatch the whip, but didn't succeed, and in the struggle he dropped his revolver, after which he showed himself the coward that he really was, for he ran, howling, off among the trees, while Fred, springing into the wagon, drove off for Mr. Stubbs' store for dear life, just missing Detective Ropes and Mat Markham, for those who had seen the boy talked, and the young iron king and his man came straight to the place where Fred had been, arriving just in time to be too late.

Of course, Bat Goshinsky wasn't there to tell them anything, and thus the chase came to an end for the time being, and a few moments later Fred and the wagon rattled into Mr. Stubbs' yard.

The storekeeper was just coming back from the fire.

There was trouble in town. The strikers were cheering and yelling, "Down with the iron kings." It was all the police could do to keep them away from the foundry.

Outside the fire lines a loud-lunged fellow had mounted a pile of scrap iron and was urging the strikers to make an attack on old Moses Markham's house.

All this Stubbs, the storekeeper, saw and heard, and he hurried back, feeling afraid that his own turn might come next, for take a hungry mob and the grocery store forms a tempting bait. Mr. Stubbs was very much alarmed.

"Fred! You here!" he exclaimed. "Good heavens, boy, what have you been about?"

"I've brought your team back, for one thing, Mr. Stubbs," replied Fred, who was trembling with excitement, "and a mighty hard time I've had to get it here, too."

"I'm right glad you did," said Mr. Stubbs. "Do you know what they are saying about you down around the foundry, Fred?"

"I suppose everything that is bad, Mr. Stubbs."

"They say that you blew up the soft-shop with dynamite, and that the detectives are chasing you all over town."

"It's a lie! I am entirely innocent."

"But where have you been with the wagon all this time?"

"Don't ask me. I can't tell you now, Mr. Stubbs. I can't give away the guilty ones till I have a chance to think. I'm between two fires, Mr. Stubbs. Just look at it! If you, who know me, won't believe in me, how can I expect that anybody else will?"

"I don't know about this, Fred," said Mr. Stubbs. "There is evidently something wrong here. You don't even deny that you know something about this dreadful affair."

"I don't deny it, Mr. Stubbs," replied Fred, proudly. "I'd be a liar if I did, and I'm not that."

"I'm afraid I ought to detain you, Fred. Mr. Mat Markham and a detective he has brought out here are looking all over for you. I met them on the bridge."

"Don't try it, Mr. Stubbs!" flashed Fred. "I've done my best for you. I've worked faithfully, and you have no right to turn against me. I'm between two fires, as I said before; the strikers are down on me on one side and the Markhams on the other. If ever a boy needed a friend, I'm the one. You mustn't try to detain me here. I won't stay."

"You'd better light out right now, then!" said Mr. Stubbs, somewhat moved by the boy's passionate appeal. "Hark! don't you hear them coming? By gracious, this is going to end up in a riot! It's my opinion the strikers mean to burn out Moses Markham before they quit to-night."

Fred waited for no second bidding, but without even stopping to say good-by to Mr. Stubbs, who certainly had been very kind to him since the labor troubles began in Welby, slid out of the yard and started for the upper village on the dead run.

It was most unfortunate that he chose the Darlington road, for Mat Markham, thinking that the boy might make for home, had led the detective around in that direction, and now, before the foundry boy had gone a dozen yards the pair came hurrying around the corner of Garden street and ran right into Fred.

"By thunder, here's your young firebug now, Markham!" cried the detective, and he whipped out his revolver, planting himself in front of the boy.

It was no use trying to dodge now.

Mat Markham caught him from behind, and, quick as lightning, Detective Ropes snapped the handcuffs on his wrists.

"You are my prisoner, Fred French!" he exclaimed. "I'll shoot you dead if you make one move to escape!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ATTACK ON THE IRON KING'S HOUSE.

Fred was tired, discouraged, all out of breath, and ready to give up, so he just held his tongue and tried to think.

"They will never believe a word I say," he reflected. "I may as well keep my mouth shut and let my lawyer do the talking. I've got to have one now, I suppose."

So when Mat Markham and the detective tried to question him Fred just put his tongue in his cheek and kept it there, never saying one word.

Yet the boy could talk fast enough if he chose.

Fred was a good talker. He had been a member of the Welby Debating Club for a year or more, and was reckoned one of the best speakers among the boys.

"You might as well let upon me, Mat Markham," he said at last. "I just won't say a word except to say I am innocent, and that's all there is about it. You can believe that or not, just as you like, but I'll prove it before I get through."

"Sharp!" said the detective. "This fellow is no fool, Markham."

"I'm one if I don't railroad him to the penitentiary," snarled the young iron king, "but what are we going to do with him to-night?"

"How about the lock-up?"

"It's a miserable old affair; besides, the keeper is a great friend of the strikers, and everlastingly down on my father. I think we had better take him to the house for to-night, and you can run him into Pittsburg first train in the morning. What do you say?"

"I don't know whether your house is a safe place or not. You heard what some of the strikers were saying as we came by."

"They would never dare to attack us!" cried Mat. "Besides, if they did, it is so much the more reason why we should want you there, Ropes. The house is the place for him, anyway you may look at it, as far as I can see."

"We'll go, then," replied Ropes. "Good job there is nobody around here; they might try a rescue. We'll hurry up."

It was now nearly one o'clock, and Main street was deserted as they hurried along.

The fire at the ruins of the soft-shop was under control, and the crowd was beginning to scatter.

Looking down toward the foundry, Mat Markham and the detective could see lanterns flashing, and many voices were shouting, when all at once they seemed to unite into one wild cry:

"Down with the Markhams! Down with the iron kings!" Mat Markham turned as pale as death.

"You hear that, Ropes?" he blurted out.

"Indeed I do," replied the detective, "and it means trouble, sure."

"It don't mean anything else. Heavens! what shall we do? My father is hardly able to stand on his feet. Those wretches mean to burn our house over our heads! Fred French, isn't it so?"

"I don't know anything at all about it," replied Fred, calmed down considerably now. "They are not my kind, and I'm not in with them. You will have to ask somebody else besides me."

"The deuce you are not! You are right in with them all, and you know it. Didn't you blow up the soft-shop? Haven't you made a loss of fifty thousand dollars for my father at least?"

"I didn't know anything about that. I had nothing at all to do with it, as I've told you before."

"Down with the iron kings! Down with the iron kings!" the mob was shouting, and the moving lights could be seen coming up the hill.

They were close to Moses Markham's house now, and Mat, throwing open the gate, hurried Fred up the gravel walk, a worse frightened boy than his prisoner was in every sense of the word.

The detective was greatly alarmed, too.

He had been mixed up in this kind of trouble before several times, and he knew just what it meant.

The police force in Welby was very small, consisting of only about a dozen men, and they, of course, would cut no figure against the mob.

Moses Markham, old and an invalid though he was, met them at the door.

He had not attempted to go down to the foundry, but he had been up and about and, hearing the cries, knew just what it all meant.

Still, considering the danger in which he and his household stood, he took the situation with remarkable coolness.

"Well! well! Whom have we here?" he demanded, as Mat and the detective hurried Fred into the big hall, closing the door behind him, locking and bolting it and putting up the chain.

"It's the firebug," replied Mat. "It's Fred French. It was he who blew up the soft-shop, father. There stands the cause of all our trouble to-night."

"It's a lie, Mat Markham!" cried Fred, raising his manacled hands and shaking them in Mat's face. "It's a lie, and I tell you so to your teeth. If you had only listened to me the explosion might never have happened. I am as innocent as you are of the whole affair."

"And I should hope so," replied the old iron king. "I knew your father well, Fred. He and I worked side by side in the old shop, which used to stand where the works stand now. He was my friend, and I don't believe his son would raise his hand against me in a time of trouble like this. There is some mistake."

"A big mistake," muttered Fred.

"No mistake at all," retorted Mat, in the same breath.

"Speak out, Fred. Tell us who did it," said Mr. Markham. "Speak up like a man!"

And Fred did speak out, then.

He hastily told the whole story, keeping back only the names, and these he made up his mind he would not reveal while matters remained as they were.

"And who were these men?" demanded Mr. Markham. "Your story sounds reasonable enough, but you have not finished it yet, my boy."

"I can't tell," replied Fred. "Remember, Mr. Markham, I am one of the strikers. I'm not talking any further yet."

"Strikers! They are criminals! That's what they are!" cried Mr. Markham. "If you expect me to believe your story you must tell."

"No," replied Fred, stubbornly. "No, I won't tell. Neither would you, when you were a foundry boy, if you were put in my place, Mr. Markham, and you know it perfectly well."

"Down with old Markham! Down with the iron kings!" fifty voices were shouting outside.

Then there was a rush of feet and a flashing of light, and more wild shouting.

The Markhams, father and son, knew that they were up against serious business, for the big gates which led out to the road were thrown open and the mob of strikers came flocking about the house.

"Come out, Markham! Come out, old man! We want work! Come out and end the strike or we will burn your house down over your head!"

CHAPTER IX.

FRED TALKS TO THE MOB.

"Mat, we are in for it! What is to be done?" the old man gasped, as he stood leaning against the banisters in the hall.

"Blest if I know," said Mat, terribly frightened, for we may as well mention right here that this attack was not wholly unexpected.

Indeed, it had been threatening for several weeks, and in anticipation of it Mr. Markham had sent his wife and daughters out of town.

"I can't speak to them," he added. "I'm too weak and nervous. Mat, you go out on the veranda and tell them that I will consent to receive a delegation from the union to-morrow, and we will form some plan of arbitration which will bring the strike to an end."

"No, I'll be hanged if I will!" retorted Mat. "They all hate me. I don't want to be shot."

"You try it, Mr. Ropes!" cried the old foundryman, as the shouting grew louder, and a furious banging on the door and ringing at the bell began.

"No, thank you," said Ropes. "I'm not hired for this sort of business. When I consented to come here to Welby and help you I made it a special point that I should not be called upon to face a mob."

"Coward!" cried the old man, his eyes flashing. "I'll face them myself, if I drop dead doing it."

He started then, but he was very weak, and he reeled and fell on the stairs.

"I'll go and speak to them, sir, if you will let me," said Fred. "You were my father's friend, and I have nothing against you. I'll go out on the veranda and tell them what you say."

"Yes, he's one of them. He isn't afraid," sneered Mat.

"Silence, you puppy!" cried Mr. Markham. "If Fred isn't afraid, then you are. If he can save my house from destruction he will never regret it. I can tell you all that."

"But I can't go with these things on, sir," added Fred, holding up his hands. "It would only make the mob madder than ever to see me so."

"You are right. Take 'em off, Ropes," ordered Mr. Markham.

Mat protested, but his father silenced him, and the detective obeyed.

"This way, Fred!" cried Mr. Markham. "Ropes, you guard this door, and shoot the first man who dares to enter, and I'll back you up. Mat, you sneak; go hide in the cellar. I'm ashamed to acknowledge you as my son!"

Thus saying, Moses Markham stumbled up the stairs, closely followed by Fred, and led the way into a handsomely furnished chamber; in front of the windows a veranda extended out from the house overlooking the grounds, which were now black with people; dozens of lanterns were flashing about the lawn.

"Hold on, Fred, I'll go myself," said Mr. Markham, with sudden animation. "These are my workmen, and I'll face them boldly. I am feeling better now."

He tottered toward the window, and threw open the folding sash, but his strength failed him.

As the crowd caught sight of the old iron king a perfect roar went up, and a few stones were thrown at the balcony.

This proved too much for the old gentleman, and he sank down into a big easy-chair, saying: "It's no use. I can't do it, Fred. You will have to speak for me, my boy!"

Fred was ready.

He had no sympathy with this mob business, nor with burn-

ing and destroying, and he was just longing for an opportunity to say his say to the workmen of Welby.

What was the astonishment of the strikers, then, to see Mr. Markham suddenly retreat and Fred French, whose name was in everybody's mouth as the firebug, thanks to the pains taken by Bat and Basil to have it so, step out in his place.

Some cheered; others hooted, but no stones were thrown.

"Firebug! Firebug!" several voices shouted.

Then others, not understanding the situation, called out:

"Traitor! Fred has turned traitor! He's in with the iron kings!"

Fred, removing his hat, stood calmly waiting for silence.

There was something commanding about the boy's manner. His very presence there on the veranda seemed to command silence, and it soon came.

"Fellow-citizens! Brother workmen! I am here to address you at the request of Mr. Markham," said Fred, in his clear, ringing voice. "He would have spoken himself, but his strength has failed him. He wishes me to say that he is now willing to meet with a committee from the union to see if arbitration will not settle our differences, and I ask you all to quietly disperse.

"Wait, friends! Silence for a minute longer." (This when voices in the crowd shouted out to know what he was doing there.) "I will say to you that I am not here of my own free will; that I have been arrested by a Pinkerton detective, charged with blowing up the soft-shop. I am innocent, and I see those in the crowd who know it. I don't believe in this sort of business. If you burn the shop down, where is the work coming from when the strike is settled, as settled it surely will be very soon. If you burn this house down you drive Mr. Markham away from Welby to make room for a corporation or a trust which will grind you down worse than he ever did. I say to you all, go home and give this business up, and arbitration will put us all back at work inside of a week."

It was a noble speech, and certainly a remarkable one for a boy of Fred French's years.

But Fred seemed to be carried away with his own enthusiasm, and he finished off in spite of many interruptions, and the crowd cheered him when he was through.

"You tell what you know, and you are as good as dead!" yelled a voice which Fred felt sure was Basil Rosensky's, although he could not see the man among the crowd.

Just then the police came hurrying up, and the crowd dispersed, which they probably would not have done if Fred had not appealed to them.

Fred stepped back through the window and turned to Mr. Markham.

The old man's head was hanging down, and he was breathing heavily.

He did not speak when Fred called him by name.

"Come up here, quick! There's something the matter with Mr. Markham!" Fred shouted down to Detective Ropes, over the banisters, and then he did what was certainly a very foolish thing.

The bathroom door at the other end of the hall stood open, and Fred ran into the room and closed it.

He knew that there was a back piazza upon the roof of which this window opened, and he made up his mind to improve the opportunity to escape.

While the detective was still on the stairs, Fred went out through the bathroom window, passed over the roof and slid down one of the pillars to the ground.

"I've done my share, and I'm not going to hang around here to be handcuffed again," he muttered, as he went running at full speed toward the garden wall.

CHAPTER X.

A TALK WITH TOM DALEY.

Fred got off the Markham grounds all right, and nobody was one bit the wiser.

He ran through the grounds, climbed over the wall and dropped down into the back road, where for the time being he was perfectly safe, as the crowd of strikers were all around in front of the house.

Once in the road, Fred leaned against the wall all out of breath, wondering what move he should make next.

He could hear the strikers dispersing, and he knew that his speech must have done some good, as it certainly had, but if he had been around in front he would have seen also that the police had arrived, and also the fire engine, for the fire at the works was out now.

It was the firemen who did more to disperse the strikers than either Fred or the few policemen, for at the suggestion of the chief they turned the hose on the mob and the water sent them scattering in all directions.

Fred heard the rattle of the engine, the swish of the water, and the wild shouts of the mob.

He made up his mind that it was a good time for disappearing, and he lost no time in doing it.

Taking to his heels, he ran around into Tulip street with the intention of going to the upper village that way, and so getting into his own house, if after he came in sight of it he should conclude that it was safe to do so.

There were but few people on the street, but even these few might mean danger to him if he was recognized, so he slowed down and, pulling his hat over his eyes, walked rapidly on, only to run plump into a big, strapping fellow who stepped out from behind one of the buttonwood trees in front of the harness factory, and, holding up both hands, clapped them down upon Fred's shoulders, crying:

"Halt!"

Fred jumped away, and was just about to strike at the fellow, when he recognized Tom Daley.

"Good gracious, how you scared me, Tom!" he gasped.

"Well, you ought to be scared!" retorted Tom. "What do you mean, Fred French, by joining hands with the iron kings?"

"Who has joined hands with the iron kings?" demanded Fred, indignantly.

"You have."

"Whoever says that lies, Tom Daley. Now don't get mad. I mean nothing personal, but it isn't so, and I won't be told so by you or any one else."

"Didn't you make a speech from old Markham's balcony? I heard you myself. Blamed if I understand what you are driving at. You seem to have managed to get every one down on you. One set says you blew up the soft-shop, another says you are right in with the Markhams, and I'll be blamed if it don't look that way. Anyhow, you've made Welby too hot to hold you, and the very best thing you can do is to get out of town just as quick as ever you can."

"Don't I know that, Tom? Here, step into the alley where we can talk without being seen. "Don't you turn against me without knowing the truth. Did you hear my speech from that balcony, Tom Daley, answer me that?"

"No, I didn't. I was too far away."

"Then you don't know anything about it, and have no right to express an opinion. I suppose you think I went straight to Markham's to give away the secrets of the strikers, when I don't know their secrets, and don't want to know them; is that the idea?"

"Well, I did think that, Fred, I own."

"You're all wrong. I wouldn't decide the case against you without hearing what you have to say, and you have no right to decide it against me. I was arrested by a Pinkerton detective, and taken to Markham's, Tom. I went out on the balcony to save the old man's life, and why shouldn't I, when Moses Markham was my father's old friend?"

"He's no friend of yours or any other workingman, Fred."

"There you are wrong. He has grown rich, to be sure, and he holds on to his money."

"I should say he did."

"Never mind that. I'm not in love with the Markhams, as you very well know, but I can see through a brick when there's a hole in it as well as the next fellow. There's got to be bosses as well as workmen, and it might as well be Moses Markham as anybody else. He gets lots of business, and he keeps the works a-going, and so furnishes a living to lots of men. What good does it do us to blow up the works or burn them down? Is that going to bring us work and end all this miserable business? I say it's rank folly. If the strike was to be declared off to-day the soft-shop hands would have to wait three months before they could go to work again, and that with their wives and children starving; and why? All because a few fools destroyed the building to make themselves look big in the eyes of the rest."

"Well, it's plain that you didn't blow up the building," replied Tom, "Pitch in, Freddy. Tell us your story, so that we may know what it's all about."

Tom Daley took rather a different view of matters after Fred had explained the happenings of the night.

"You couldn't do any different from what you did do," he declared. "I was dead wrong, but, Fred, this is a bad business. Bat and Basil will kill you, sure, if they catch you hanging around here. Have you told anybody else what you have told me?"

"I've mentioned no names to any one but you, and I don't intend to, Tom. No one shall get it out of me; if that isn't standing by one's fellow-workmen I don't know what is."

"Right," said Tom, decidedly. "I take it all back. Now, then, Freddy, where do you intend to go?"

"To Pittsburgh. I may be able to get work there. I must; mother and the girls can't live on nothing, and there is no one but me to bring in a cent. I'm going home now to bid them good-by, and then I shall walk to Whitneyville and get the train."

"Don't you go near the house!" cried Tom. "Not on your life! Why, there's a gang there laying for you. You just want to keep away."

"But I must see them. I can't go away without it."

"Don't you go away to-day, Fred. You're a fool if you do, and don't you go near the house unless you want to get slugged."

"But I must go away, Tom. Even if the foundrymen don't do me up I shall be arrested, sure, if I don't."

"Now, now! Take it easy! I'll see your mother for you. As for yourself, you know where to go, Fred."

"Where do you mean?"

"The old hiding-hole is there yet, boy. Many's the time we've laid in there roasting potatoes when we played hookey; don't tell me that you forget."

"Indeed, I don't forget. It's a good idea. I'll take your advice, Tom, and—by thunder, the crowd is coming now!"

"Kill the scab! Kill the scab!" was suddenly shouted out upon the silence of the night, and a crowd of men and boys came surging in full pursuit of a man who was running for his life.

"It's Joe Weekly!" breathed Fred. "By gracious, I thought it was me!"

"Joe Weekly is a fool to show himself on the street, and you can do nothing about it, Fred. Why did he want to stick to the foundry after everybody else had left, and lots of good it did him, for he was fired in the end."

The poor hunted fellow had ventured out to see the excitement, and now he was paying the penalty, which perhaps would be his life.

"Oh, these iron kings! These iron kings!" groaned Fred. "Which are the worst, your Markhams and your Dathans, or fellows like Bat Goshinsky, who drive these men mad and make them do murder?"

"Come on!" whispered Tom, seizing Fred's arm. "This is no time for moralizing. Next thing you know it will be yourself. Come on; I'll go with you to the old hiding-hole and you'll stay there till all this excitement dies down."

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE OLD HIDING-HOLE.

"Here we are, Fred!"

"Looks just the same, don't it? It must be three years since I was up here, Tom."

"We had better make sure there's no one inside. Hold on till I strike a match. First thing in the morning I'll bring you up a pair of blankets and some grub, and a few necessary things. You can get all the water you want from the spring, and you ought to be comfortable enough in here."

"That's right, and I know I shall be. No, the place is all our own, Tom. Well, this isn't so bad, but I'm sure I don't know what my poor mother and the girls will do if I don't get work soon."

"Would they be any better off if you were jailed, Freddy? I guess not. Dora and I will look after them. Our money isn't all gone yet, and until it is your folks shan't suffer. Now, good-by, old man; you had better go right to sleep. Pleasant dreams to you. See you later on."

It was dismal work for Fred French to stand there and watch Tom Daley disappear in the darkness.

They had come away up on the side of the high, wooded hill which overlooked Welby, and Fred was standing in front of a pile of big rocks which in some long past age had tumbled down from the granite cliffs which frowned above.

Concealed in among these rocks was a small opening which the boys called a cave, although in reality it was nothing but the way in which the rocks laid together that formed it.

The existence of this cave was known to but few, or at least Fred and Tom thought they had good reason to believe so.

Both forgot that time had passed since they were schoolboys, and that other people came up on the hill besides themselves.

But Fred was far too tired to think much about it.

As soon as Tom was well out of sight he went inside and stretched himself upon the ground.

He did not intend to go to sleep; he thought he could safely lie down, keep awake and listen, but the boy was thoroughly tired out, and the next thing he knew it was broad daylight, and Tom Daley was bending over him.

It was nine o'clock in the morning, and almost from the moment he lay down Fred had never known a thing.

"By gracious, Tom, I've been asleep!" he exclaimed, springing up.

"Asleep! I should say you had! I had a deuce of a time to get you to open your eyes! However, it's all right. You're safe here. I've given it out all over town that you have gone

to Philadelphia, and that Pinkerton man started after you by the morning train."

"Good!" cried Fred. "Then I can go down and see mother and the girls."

"No, you can't. Your mother says you mustn't think of it. Everything is all right. I left an order for a whole lot of stuff to be sent to them at Stubbs' this morning. No, no! Don't thank me. You would have done the same for me if I was in your place, Fred. I'm sure of that."

"Of course I would," replied Fred. "Now, tell me all the news in town while I eat my breakfast. By gracious, did you drag all those things up the hill? I hope no one saw you. Tom Daley, I will say this: You are the best friend a fellow ever had."

And Fred might well say so, for Tom had done a good work in the way of creature comforts, and no mistake.

There were two blankets and a pillow wrapped in one big bundle; then there was a huge market basket, which, upon being opened, proved to contain a ham, several loaves of bread, two pounds of butter, a dozen eggs, some apples, and other things.

Tom explained that he had made two trips up the hill, not disturbing Fred the first time he came to the cave.

The unfortunate "scab" had been terribly beaten the night before, and now lay at the point of death.

The doctor had been with old Moses Markham all night, and it was said that the iron king was dying.

Mat Markham had been seen driving furiously along the Darlington road, and a shot had been fired at him out of a window, killing his horse, whereupon Mat had vowed vengeance on everybody, hired a rig at the livery stable, and driven off no one knew where.

As for strike news, there was none. Everything remained just the same, except that the soft-shop men were highly indignant at the destruction of their building.

"Everybody believes you did the job, Fred," Tom wound up by saying, "and the men are going to hold a meeting to-night about it. I expect they will offer a reward for your capture. That's what people say."

After Fred had eaten his breakfast, Tom left and went down the hill.

Fred accompanied him for a short distance, and it was agreed that inasmuch as he now had provisions enough to last him several days, Tom should not venture up to the cave until the third day, for fear of attracting attention.

The boys shook hands and parted at a certain great boulder, where the path divided, and Fred slowly returned to the cave.

He was dreadfully discouraged. It seemed disgraceful to be hiding there among the rocks like a criminal, when he was absolutely guiltless of any wrongdoing.

"I'll stand it till the end of the week," he determined. "I'll give them time to cool down a bit, and then I'm off for Pittsburgh or Philadelphia. I might just as well be dodging the detectives in one place as another, and I'll be hanged if I'll stay here like a rat in a hole!"

He had just reached the cave now, and he made this remark aloud as he passed in between the two big overhanging rocks.

"I wouldn't if I was you," said a calm voice in front of him. "I don't think you are that kind of a boy."

Fred jumped back two feet, for there before him stood Detective Ropes, leaning against the rocks, calmly smoking a cigar.

CHAPTER XII.

FRED STARTS IN A NEW BUSINESS.

"Come in, young man! Don't be afraid."

Fred pulled himself together all in an instant, for he was not one of the excitable kind.

"I'm not afraid of you or any other man, so long as my conscience is clear," he said, "and that's what it is now."

"Good!" said the detective, flipping the ashes off his cigar. "Keep it so. It's the best way."

"I thought you had gone to Philadelphia," added Fred. "You were seen to get on the train."

"Yes, but I got off again at Darlington. You see, I was looking for you, and as I knew very well you had not left the neighborhood, I didn't see any sense in my going to Philadelphia. Wasn't I right?"

"I guess you were. How did you happen to track me here?"

"I didn't happen. I figured it all out on true scientific principles. I followed you right up."

"Am I under arrest?"

"Well, that depends. Let's talk about it. You started in to tell Mat Markham and me a story last night. We wouldn't listen to you, but, then, you see, I was in a hurry. I've got plenty of time on my hands now, if you still care to tell your little tale."

"I don't know whether I do or not," said Fred. "I don't see as it's any use."

"Suit yourself. Think about it. Meanwhile, I'm hungry. Any objection to my helping myself to some of this grub?"

"You can take what you like," said Fred. "I don't suppose I shall need it now."

"You are wrong there. You will need it all, and more, if you take the sensible view of the situation that I expect you to do. Now, while I eat this hunk of bread and cheese, you tell your story if you want to, and I advise you to do so. If you won't I shan't ask you again, and I'll do the talking, only decide quick, for there is no time to lose."

"I'll tell all but the names," replied Fred; "those I just won't tell, and it's no use to try to make me. I'm as innocent as the sun, but while the strike is on I'm not going back on my fellow-workmen."

"Good!" cried the detective. "That's the way I like to hear a fellow talk. Now, get right down to it, and I'm all ears."

Fred told all, then, taking his time and going into every detail, the detective listening in perfect silence until he was through.

"I suppose you don't believe a word of it?" said Fred.

"On the contrary, I believe every word of it. I think you are a very bright young man."

"Never mind about that part of it. What are you going to do with me—that's what I want to know?"

"Let's see," replied the detective, lighting a fresh cigar. "What shall I do with you? Let me think. Of course, a fool would drag you to jail, but I try to think that I'm not altogether a fool. Suppose I take you into partnership, Fred French? How would that suit you, now?"

"I'm sure I can't imagine what you mean," replied Fred, greatly puzzled.

"I mean just what I say," replied the detective. "Look here, Fred, I believe every word you have told me, and I don't propose to arrest you. What I want you to do is to go down into Hometown, take board at Mother Magowsky's and do a little detective work for me. Hold on! Don't call it spying, and all that sort of thing. You don't believe in destroying the property of these iron kings. You said so last night in the alley to Tom Daley. Didn't you, now?"

"Were you in the alley listening to our talk?" cried Fred, amazed.

"Of course I was. I followed you right away from Markham's house, and I followed you here. Now, hold on, and listen. This explosion at the soft-shop is only the beginning. I have reason to know that there is a regular plot on foot to blow up the Darlington Iron Works and to destroy the rest of

Markham's plant. That's death to the iron kings with a vengeance! It's death and starvation to you workmen, too. And who's doing it? You know and I don't, but you are going to help me, and I'm going to help you. Get to work, boy! The worst iron kings in this whole miserable business are these very men who pull the wool over the eyes of their fellow-workmen, and, bribed by a rival concern near Pittsburgh that I could name if I chose, are willing to drive the iron business out of this valley forever and take the bread out of the mouths of hundreds of innocent women and children. Those are the kind of iron kings I am fighting, Fred French, and if you are the sort of fellow I think you are, you will join in with me and help me to fight them to the last gasp."

"I'll do it!" cried Fred. "I'm right with you every time. You have shown me that I am wrong. The names should be told, and I am willing to tell them now."

"No, don't. Wait until you know all," said the detective. "What's done is done, and can't be undone, but you and I will save the iron business in this valley and put the scoundrels who are trying to ruin it for gain behind the bars."

"I'm with you," said Fred, earnestly. "But what can I do? They all know me, every one of them. I can't speak Polish or Hungarian, so there you are."

"The last is an objection, of course," said the detective, "but at the same time it would be impossible for me to get a young man who could speak Polish or Hungarian who would help me as you can. As for the rest, I can soon fix that. Do you put yourself into my hands for this good work, Fred French? Say the word and we will begin right now."

"I do," replied Fred, "for I believe you are a true man."

"Shake!" said the detective. "Now to work. Wait a minute."

He stepped out of the cave and immediately returned with a bundle, which, when opened, proved to contain a shabby suit of clothes.

"Put these on," said the detective, "and I'll do the rest. I shall have to cut your hair short, and there will be a little doctoring to do to your face to carry out the wig which you will wear, but when it's all done your own mother wouldn't know you, and that's right, Fred French."

Certainly Mother Magosky, who kept the big boarding-house in Hometown, did not recognize Fred, the foundry boy, in the stout, red-headed young fellow who walked in upon her an hour later and applied for a room with board.

As he paid two weeks in advance, Fred got the accommodations, and that night he sat at the supper-table with twenty of his fellow-workmen, not one of whom in the least imagined who he was.

Supper over, Fred drifted with the crowd and the crowd drifted to a large saloon farther up the street.

Bat Goshinsky was not there, but Pete Taylor and Basil were.

The talk was all about the explosion and the riot, probably, but as it wasn't in English it did Fred no good.

He was acting under orders, and he sat at a table with a glass of beer before him, patiently waiting for the hands of the clock to point to the hour of ten, and as soon as they did so, Fred slipped out into the back yard.

"Will they come?" he muttered as he dropped down behind a big water-but which stood under the spout.

Here he crouched for ten minutes, when all at once the gate which communicated with the alley opened and Bat Goshinsky slipped in.

Fred expected some one to follow him, and he was not mistaken, but what he did not expect was to see Mat Markham follow the big Pollack into the yard.

This was precisely what happened, however.

"So this is the place, is it?" whispered Mat, thickly, for he seemed to be in his usual state of befuddlement.

"This is the place," replied Bat. "Follow me, boss, and I'll take you to a private box where we can have our little confab all to ourselves. I'm just as much down on Fred French as you are, and if I can lay my hands on him I'll make it hot for him, you bet."

CHAPTER XIII.

A DASTARDLY PLOT.

Fred French knew just what he was about.

Detective Ropes had disclosed to him a plot so tremendous that he could scarcely believe it.

But, like Fred, the detective named no names, except that of Bat Goshinsky, so the appearance of Mat Markham in the company of the big foundryman was a complete surprise.

What the detective said was:

"At ten o'clock precisely get into the yard behind the saloon and look out for Bat Goshinsky, who will come there in company with another man. For me to go into that saloon in any disguise would be almost sure death, but you can do it safely enough. Overhear what they have to say at any cost, for the continuance of the iron business in this valley depends upon it—on that point you can take my word."

This was what decided Fred to take hold with the detective, and now that he saw Mat Markham in company with Bat Goshinsky he felt most thankful that he had done so, for he knew that it could mean nothing else than some crooked work in the wind.

But what was he to do about it? That was the puzzling question.

The first thing to do was manifestly to get as near to them as possible, and Fred started in to do that. When they passed in through the back door of the saloon, Fred slipped in after them. Here were three private rooms in a row, with tables and chairs inside. The dividing partitions between them were not much higher than a man's head.

Bat pushed open the door of the corner room and ushered the young iron king in.

"It won't do for you to be seen here," Fred heard him say. "They'd tear you to pieces if you was to go out there and stand up to the bar."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of them. I'll take my chances on that," Fred heard Mat answer. "Don't waste time chinning, Bat, but just go right ahead."

Then the bell in the private room rang, and the barkeeper brought in drinks.

All this time Fred was seated in the next room with his head on the table. Just as the bartender was leaving he thought he was caught, for Bat said:

"Anybody in the next box, Bill?"

"Nobody," replied the bartender.

"Then don't let anybody in. I want to have a private talk with this gentleman. Shut the end door."

The end door was the one connecting all the rooms with the saloon, and, of course, once that was fastened nobody could come in unless they came the back way.

Fred's heart was in his mouth as the bartender stepped out into the passage.

He expected to have him look into the room, and if he had done so he would have found Fred apparently sound asleep, and ready to be "fired out" without saying a word, but fortunately for his purpose, nothing of the sort happened, and of the conversation which followed Fred heard every word.

Mat Markham began it.

"Never mind about Fred French now," he said. "If you come across him do him up, for all I care. The meddlesome little wretch! He has crossed my path once too often, but we have got more important business on hand than talking about him."

"I should say so," growled Bat. "How did I do up the job last night—all right?"

"You did, in spite of Fred French, but he came mighty near spoiling it all."

"So did you by coming down to the works with that infernal detective just at the wrong time."

"I couldn't help it, Bat. You see, it was the old man who engaged the detective, and he insisted upon me taking him down to the works, then and there, but I've got a growl against you, too. What did you bring that crowd up to our house for? I want the old man to croak, and he came mighty near it last night, but if those felows had broken in there what would have become of me?"

"I couldn't help it. 'Twasn't my fault. Basil did that, and I couldn't stop him nohow."

"Don't do it again, that's all. Now, what's the plan? Is there much dynamite left?"

"Lots, in spite of Pete Taylor getting drunk on me and blowing up one box. I wish it had blown him up, the infernal fool!"

"All right, then. Now, when do we act?"

"To-morrow morning at half-past two is the time set for Darlington—is that all right?"

"It is. Do you propose to tackle the whole works?"

"We can't. It is just impossible. I have arranged to blow up the main foundry. That's all we can do."

"And when do you tackle our main building?"

"I think you had better leave that till next week. There's the guard."

"That's so. I may be able to get rid of them by next week. I certainly could not do it before. If the old gent keeps on failing at the rate he has for the last twenty-four hours he ought to pass in his checks by that time, and then I shall have everything my own way."

"Exactly," replied Bat. "Now, let's have another drink."

Here was a terrible state of affairs.

Fred, with his ear pressed against the thin partition, heard every word.

Bad as he knew Mat Markham to be, he had not supposed him to be as bad as this.

Here was a young man who, for some reason which Fred could not comprehend, was actually plotting the death of his own father and the destruction of his business. It seemed almost incomprehensible, but there was more to come.

"Now, then, that's all right," said Mat, after the drink had been served, "you will attend to Darlington, and the money is ready for you as soon as the job is done. That brings us to the next job."

"Hello, you have got another, hey?" exclaimed Bat.

"That's what I have, and this is a thousand-dollar one."

"Good enough, boss. Out with it, and I'm your man, if the risk isn't too great."

"There is no risk, unless it is the risk of getting shot from a window, and you must look out for that. Besides, it will help you to prove an alibi about Darlington if you can make your train long enough to give you time to get up from the foundry to John Cranford's house, and you ought to be able to do that."

"I see," growled Bat. "Well?"

"Cranford is one of us iron kings, even if he has retired from business. He has advised my father to fight the strikers, and has given the same advice to Henry Dathan. Let the men

know it. Get a gang around the house just at the time of the explosion. Threaten him, but do nothing until I come driving up. I shall look to you to protect me while I address the mob from my buggy, urging you to disperse, which you will promptly do. That is all I ask."

"You ask a lot, boss. Once you start our fellow going it is hard to quiet them down."

"In other words, it is easier to set your dogs on than to call them off."

"Exactly; and the sight of you won't make matters any better, that's sure."

"Still, it can be done, if you send only those you can trust."

"Yes, I think so, if you will take your chances of a stray shot."

"I shall have to."

"I think I see your game, boss. You are after the Cranford girl. You want to do the rescue act and so make yourself solid in that quarter. Is that it?"

"I don't deny it. I'm paying big money for the job."

"O. K. It's a go."

"What time?"

"Say two o'clock precisely at John Cranford's house. You think you can arrange about the fuse?"

"Sure."

"I'd like to have the explosion take place just about the time I get there."

"It shall if you are there at two o'clock sharp. Now, is that all?"

"Yes."

"Haven't you forgotten something?"

"You mean the cash? That's coming now."

There was silence for a few moments, and Fred felt sure that money changed hands.

Then the young iron king and the labor king left the room, passing out by the back door.

Fred was right behind them.

"I must see Detective Ropes at once," he murmured. "He was dead right, but I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't heard it with my own ears."

CHAPTER XIV.

UP AGAINST TROUBLE AGAIN.

Imagine Fred French's feelings as he climbed up the hill to keep his appointment with Detective Ropes.

The engagement was a sliding one.

It had been arranged that the detective should remain quietly in the cave until Fred returned, and there the foundry boy discovered him smoking his inevitable cigar.

He was right on the alert, too, for the moment he heard the sound of Fred's approaching footsteps he appeared at the entrance to the cave with his revolver cocked and ready.

"Oh, it's you, Fred, is it?" he exclaimed. "A quarter past eleven o'clock. You are right on time, boy. Well, what do you know that you didn't know before?"

"I think I know who the real father of this strike is," replied Fred, "and I would not have believed it if you had told me. It just beats the band!"

"Ah-ha! Well, my boy, we live and learn. The man who took you to the soft-shop last night and tried to make you do his dirty work was Mr. Bat Goshinsky. Isn't it so?"

"It certainly is."

"And you saw him to-night? You heard him talk? It all came out as arranged?"

"That's what it did. I was in one private room in Mugge's saloon and they were in the next one. I heard every word."

"You haven't said who was with Bat Goshinsky yet, Fred."

"I'm waiting for you to say."

"Sharp! You want to see if I know as much as I pretend."

"That's it."

"Mat Markham was the man, Fred—the son of the great iron king of Welby, who lies dying to-night. This young scoundrel who is pretending to work with me is working against me—against his father, against the whole iron interest of this valley, and if I know anything he is paid to do this dirty work."

"But why should he do it?" asked Fred. "Isn't he working against his own interests? What possible good can it do to him to have his father's property destroyed when, if the old man dies, as you think he is going to, it will all come to him?"

"That's plain enough, Fred. The place is heavily insured, and the Welby Iron Works have been losing money for a long while. The buildings destroyed and Moses Markham dead, Mat gets the insurance—a large sum in ready cash."

"I see."

"You don't see all yet. What if Mat Markham had been offered a big price by one of his father's bitterest rivals to put the two principal iron works in this valley out of business?"

"Can it be so?"

"I have every reason to believe it to be so; still, I could not swear to it. One thing is certain, Mat Markham is a great scoundrel, who, young as he is, ought to have been clapped in State's prison two years ago. I believe he would murder his father with his own hands if he dared. But enough of this. Here I am doing all the talking. Out with your story, boy, I want to hear every word, and when you are through you can tell me the names of the fellows who were with Bat Goshinsky last night."

"I'll tell that right now; it was Basil Rosensky, Pete Taylor and Long Luke," said Fred, and then he went on to tell all that he had overheard.

The detective did not interrupt him, and made no comments when he was through, except to say:

"So that's their game."

Then he lit a fresh cigar, and for a good ten minutes paced the floor of the cave in silence.

"Fred, it's a problem to know what to do," he said at last. "I can't be in two places at once. Who is this man Cranford? I know nothing about him. He must stand aside, for, come what will, the Darlington Iron Works must be saved."

"I'll warn the Cranfords," replied Fred. "I intended to do so, anyway. I know them. If you will let me, I will go to their house at once."

"There's where the trouble comes in. It can't be done. I must have help. My first step is clearly to go to Henry Dathan and tell him what I have learned, and there isn't a moment to be lost in doing it. Meanwhile, you must go down into Welby and wire my chief at Johnstown. I'll write the dispatch. Hold on, can the operator at Welby be trusted?"

"I don't think he can, sir. Joe Tavers is on to-night. He's entirely in with the strikers and a bad fellow. I wouldn't trust him as far as I can sling a cat by the tail."

"I thought as much. How about the operator at Hawley, the next station up the road?"

"Don't know him."

"What about Darlington? Suppose I send the dispatch?"

"Ed Roden is at Darlington. His father and two of his brothers are out on the strike. You can judge for yourself."

"It's hard to decide, boy, but it has got to be done right now. You go to Hawley and send the dispatch. Hire a team and make as quick time as possible. Meanwhile, I go straight to Darlington and stay there. The Cranfords I will leave to

you. If I get my hands on those scoundrels, as I hope I may, you will have nothing to do but to join me in the morning. I can make no appointment, for it is impossible to tell what may happen, but after I am through with my work I will come back here."

The detective then took a telegraph blank from his pocket and wrote the dispatch.

"Send twenty men to Darlington by midnight train," was the way it read.

They parted at the foot of the hill, and Fred went straight to the nearest livery stable.

He felt doubtful about being able to hire a team at that hour of the night, but he got it all right, for the detective had given him \$50 and told him to offer \$25 as a deposit for the safe return of the rig.

At Hawley the telegram was sent. The operator in the tower was an elderly man, who asked no questions and made no comments, but just started the message over the wire.

Fred then got into the buggy and started for Darlington by the back road, for he thought it better to keep out of Welby.

He urged the horse on to all the speed he was capable of making, for it was already after one o'clock, and the time was getting short.

Coming at last to the cross-road where he had turned off to go down to the horseback, where he would have to strike into the Darlington road, Fred grew so nervous that he could hardly hold the reins.

"What in the world is the matter with me?" he thought. "I have been able to keep cool enough up to now. What does it mean?"

He grew worse and worse as he neared the horseback. It seemed to him that something dreadful was going to happen, and sure enough it proved so, for just as he was about to turn the horse in on to the narrow causeway the animal shied, and it was all that Fred could do to keep from going over the bank.

There was something lying in the road; something long and dark.

Fred, straining his eyes to see what it was, drew back in horror.

"Heavens! It's a man!" he gasped. "Is he dead?"

He sprang out of the buggy and led the horse forward.

The knowing animal seemed to realize that he was safe now, and made no objection.

The man was lying face downward directly across the causeway, and as the horse seemed to be quiet enough now, Fred ventured to let go of the bridle and, bending down, turned the body over.

The head was fearfully battered and the face was covered with blood.

There in the darkness Fred could not recognize the features, but there was something in the general build of the man and his clothes which sent a shudder all through him.

"What if it should be—?" he muttered.

And it was.

He struck a match and held it close to the face.

The man in the road was Detective Ropes!

but it was pretty hard, for Mr. Ropes proved to be entirely unconscious.

What was he to do with him after he got him in the buggy, with the time growing shorter every moment?

"Did he ever get to Darlington?" thought Fred. "He must have. He couldn't have been lying here all this time, or some one would have found him; there must have been a dozen teams over the road since he reached this place."

How was he ever to get the poor fellow into the buggy?

He struck another match and held it over the face of the wounded detective, who was breathing heavily and was quite unconscious. There was no blood in the road—no signs of a struggle.

"This man was brought here from somewhere else!" Fred exclaimed, half aloud. "They put him here so that some one would run over him. He has never seen Mr. Dathan. He didn't reach Darlington at all, and I'm sure of it. Oh, what shall I do?"

He knew that it must be nearly half-past one now. The dispatch had conveyed no information, and he felt that the Pinkerton men were probably waiting in the station for the detective to come with instructions.

"I must get him into the buggy somehow, and I must drive to the station," thought Fred; "as for the Cranfords, they will have to wait. The iron works must be saved."

Exerting all his strength, he finally managed to lift the detective into the buggy, where he fell down all in a heap. Fred let him remain in a half-sitting position on the floor of the buggy, with his head resting against the seat, being able to so support him with his own legs after he took his seat, and in this uncomfortable position he drove like mad over the horseback, expecting every moment to pick up a stray shot from the revolver of some striker crouching on the side of the road.

None came, however.

As Fred went flying past the Cranford place it looked dark and deserted. He longed to stop and give his warning, but as he had made up his mind that it must be the iron works first, he did not dare to risk the time, so he urged the horse on into Darlington, making straight for the station.

It was closed, and there was no one in sight.

Down the bridge Fred could see the buildings of the big foundry looming up darkly against the sky.

He had cooled down by this time, and his own determined spirit had firm hold of him.

The detective was still breathing, but to do anything for him he must have help, so Fred sprang out of the buggy and hurried around the station, determined to go up into the tower and call down the operators if necessary. This, however, he did not have to do, for he ran into the watchman before he had gone a dozen yards.

"Hello! Who are you?" demanded the watchman, flashing his lantern in Fred's face.

Fred knew the man perfectly well, and he was just about to call him by name when he fortunately remembered that he was disguised, and, checking himself, said:

"Is there a gang of men here from Johnstown, in by the midnight train? I was to meet them here at one o'clock."

"Why, no, and you won't be apt to meet them," replied the watchman. "The train is stalled just this side of Cranford. No. 9, the way-freight, is off the track. It will be a couple of hours at least before the road is clear."

Fred almost dropped on the platform. His last hope seemed to have vanished, for he had counted upon meeting these men.

"I'm in trouble, cap," he said, pulling himself together. "I drove over from Hawley, and coming along the horseback I found a man lying in the road. He's been terribly beaten,

CHAPTER XV.

WHO IS THIS MAN?

"Wake up, Mr. Ropes! Wake up! Try and stand on your feet!"

The detective was not dead, and Fred was doing his best,

and I think he is dying. I managed to get him into the buggy, and he is around on the other side of the station now. If you will open the door I'll help you carry him in and run for a doctor. I don't know that it can be done, but at least we ought to try to save his life."

"We must!" cried the watchman, who was a kind-hearted fellow. "Come, I'll help you get him inside."

They had the detective stretched upon the station floor in a moment, and Fred started up the street on the run toward the doctor's house, which was just around the corner, according to the watchman.

He found the house, pulled the night-bell furiously, and when the answer came through the speaking-tube he called his message back.

"I'll be right over," replied the doctor. "You can look for me in ten minutes' time."

But Fred did not propose to look for him at all. He dashed away from the door, and, running around into Westmoreland street, flew toward the handsome mansion of Henry Dathan, the head of the Darlington Iron Works.

The big gate which separated the grounds from the road was closed and locked, but this did not hinder Fred, who immediately climbed over the wall and was running up the graveled walk when a large man, with a slouch hat drawn down over his eyes, suddenly stepped out from behind a low pine tree, and, shaking a big club in the boy's face, brought him to a halt.

"Who are you? What do you want here?" he demanded, in a suppressed voice.

"Who are you?" asked Fred, trembling with excitement.

"I am the private watchman. Speak, or I'll whack you over the head with this club."

"I want to see Mr. Dathan!" panted Fred. "The strikers are going to blow up the foundry. Help me! There may be time to save it yet!"

"Oh, I'll help you!" hissed the man, seizing Fred by the throat with his left hand, at the same time bringing the club down upon the boy's head with his right.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT THE MERCY OF THE FIRE FIENDS.

Fred was completely knocked out by that blow of the club.

When he came to his senses again, and it was not until after some minutes, he found himself lying on the ground against a stone wall.

His hands were tied behind him, and there was a handkerchief stuffed in his mouth.

There were low pine trees and shrubbery growing near, and among these were three men talking in suppressed tones.

Fred's heart had sunk now to the lowest depths.

It was all over.

In spite of the brave and active part he had played, he had failed—utterly failed.

Detective Ropes was probably dead. Mr. Dathan remained unwarmed of the danger which threatened his property, and the Darlington works were doomed, even if they had not already been blown to pieces; as for Lena Cranford, Fred shuddered to think what her fate might be, for although from what he had overheard he knew that it was not Mat Markham's purpose to harm the girl, still he had no confidence in Bat Goshinsky's ability to control the mob, once they were started to attack the house of the ex-iron king.

These were Fred French's thoughts as he lay there trying to catch the whispered words of the men among the trees,

At first he could not grasp what was being said, but it came to him plainer, and he knew that they were talking about him.

"Shall we kill him?" said one voice.

"I'm not up to that," replied another. "I'll give him a blame good licking if you say the word, but when you come to killing, you will have to get some one else to do the job."

"But there is no doubt he is a detective, or a spy of some kind."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know? Why, he engaged board at Mother Magosky's only yesterday afternoon, and was hanging around Mugge's for a couple of hours this evening. Of course, he is a spy. Didn't he say himself that he wanted to warn Dathan of what was going on?"

"Well, we had better take him to Bat and let him decide. You stay here till you hear the explosion, and then make straight for John Cranford's house."

"Cranford's? What are we to do there? What has he got to do with our affairs?"

"Why, he has got everything to do with them. They say it was by his advice that the iron kings did the lock-out act. The boys are going to give him a great shake-up, and don't you forget it. Shouldn't wonder if it ended in his house being burned down."

There was some further talk, but as they lowered their voices then, Fred could not catch the words which followed.

He struggled to burst his bonds. The cord gave considerably. Fred just began to think that he was going to be able to manage it, when suddenly all three men came toward him, and he was seized and pulled to his feet.

"Take him right down to Bat," said one of the men, and then they began to talk Polish.

Fred recognized two of them as fellow-workmen of his in the Welby foundry. The third was a stranger, and probably belonged to the Darlington works.

This man sprang over the wall and the other two, lifting him up, passed him over, the man on the other side catching the boy by the waist and lowering him to the ground.

The other two followed, and Fred was hurried down an alleyway which led straight to the foundry.

There was not a soul in sight. When they entered the foundry yard they found it entirely deserted. As they passed along by the office the men suddenly stopped, and one of them peered in at the window and tapped lightly on the glass.

Immediately the office door was opened slightly and a man peered out.

"That you, Bat?" asked one of the men—the third man, the stranger who had knocked Fred down with the club, had returned over the wall to continue his watch over the house of the iron king.

Bat Goshinsky, in answer, stepped out into full view.

"Who have you got there?" he asked.

"A spy! A Pinkerton man, most likely," was the reply, "Shall we bring him in and leave him with the rest?"

"Don't know about that. He has seen you fellows, and now he has seen me. I don't like the idea of leaving such a chap as that at large."

"Well, then, what shall we do with him?" asked the man. "Of course, we had to bring him here. We couldn't help that."

"Bring him in," said Bat. "I'll give him a double-cross. If he ever sees anybody again after he gets through digesting that I greatly miss my mark."

There was not much hope in Fred's heart when he was hustled into the foundry office then.

Four men lay stretched unconscious upon the office floor. One was the regular watchman of the foundry, three were private detectives hired to assist him,

They were all dead drunk, made so by a fourth detective who had sold out to the strikers, but Fred thought that they were all dead.

"It's all up with me," he said to himself, "but, anyhow, I'll die game."

He was destined to pass through a totally different ordeal, however, and the end of it was not to be death.

Bat whipped out a small dark-lantern, and, pushing back the slide, flashed the light into Fred's face.

"This fellow is disguised," he promptly said, at the same time removing the gag, adding: "Boy, who are you?"

Fred did not dare to answer. He knew that discovery would follow if he spoke in Bat Goshinsky's hearing then, and he felt that discovery would mean nothing else but death.

"Why don't you answer?" snarled Bat, knocking off his hat.

"Red-headed, eh?" he added. "I guess not! I'll fix that!"

He seized Fred's shock of red hair, pulled and off it came in his hands.

"Fred French!" cried Bat and the other two in a breath.

"Well, that's me," retorted Fred, with a coolness which surprised himself. "What are you going to do about it, Bat Goshinsky? I'm in your power, and I suppose you'll make the most of it. Go ahead."

"You blamed little traitor! What I ought to do is to put a knife right into your heart!" snarled Bat. "Where did you find him, boys?"

"On the other side of Dathan's wall on his way to warn Dathan about to-night's job," was the reply. "You'd better kill him, boss."

"No," said Bat. "I know of a trick worth two of that. He shall do to-night's job with his own hands, and then we'll chuck him through the window into the shop. The dynamite will fix him. That's the way I'll serve him off. Come on, Freddy! By time, you have got yourself into trouble now! You had better have put your head into a lion's mouth than to have come sneaking around Darlington to-night. I tell you, boy, you have run up against a bad man!"

Then seizing Fred by the collar, Bat Goshinsky dragged him out of the office and down into the foundry yard.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRED DOES GOOD WORK.

When Bat Goshinsky stopped it was in the cellar under the main foundry building of the Darlington works.

"Now then, Freddy, you won't get away from me this time," he said. "We have everything fixed, don't you see? The watchmen are all paralized drunk up in the office—you saw that. Now, look around here and see how I have arranged the dynamite cartridges. A little different this time from the way we did it at Welby yesterday. That's because I am getting more expert at the business every day. After I have blown up a dozen foundries or so I shall be able to do it to the queen's taste."

Fred looked and never said a word.

He was resolved not to speak.

He thought that he saw a way of saving himself and the foundry, too, and he felt that if he talked he might drop some word which would spoil it all.

"Dumb, eh?" said Bat. "The talk all scared out of you. Well, all right. It don't make any odds. Your goose is cooked, and that's one sure thing. Ha! ha! ha! Who's paying you for this work, boy?"

Still Fred said nothing.

His eyes were fixed upon the row of dynamite cartridges,

which, with caps attached and a fuse extending from one to another, were ranged along the cellar floor.

"Oh, say, Bat, what's the use wasting so much time with the boy?" growled one of the strikers. "If you are going to do the job, do it. If you are going to blow him up, why, blow him up and let's get out of this."

"Good enough!" replied Bat. "I agree with you. I've done too much talking altogether. If one-half of my mouth had been sewed up when I was born it would be money in my pocket to-day. What do you say, shall we untie him and make him light the fuse or not?"

"Don't see a bit of use in it," replied the other. "Chuck him up there on that hanging shelf and let him go up with the building. We want to get out of here. The boys must have gathered in the woods back of Cranford's long ago."

"Right, and I've got an appointment to keep, too," said Bat. "Now then, Freddy, here goes!"

There was a long, hanging shelf extending under the floor beams used for the storage of a certain kind of clay, which rats sometimes disturbed.

Seizing Fred around the waist, Bat Goshinsky, who was as strong as a horse, lifted him up bodily and threw him upon the shelf.

Not a word from Fred yet. Not a word when the match snapped and he knew that Bat Goshinsky had lighted the fuse; not a word when the big foundryman turned and cursed him, and then left the cellar, followed by the two men.

It was a terrible situation, however. It would be difficult to imagine a worse one, if one was to try.

There Fred lay with his arms tied behind him, directly over a row of twenty dynamite cartridges attached by caps to the lighted fuse.

Perfect silence reigned in the cellar for a few moments after the strikers left, save for the occasional snapping of the fuse.

Fred was not ready to move yet. He remembered the conversation overheard at Mugge's saloon, and he felt sure that the fuse was long enough to enable the strikers to reach John Cranford's house.

This was the bravest thing Fred had done yet, to lie there quietly so as to give Bat and his two companions in crime ample time to get away.

At last the brave boy was ready to act.

He knew that the cord around his wrists had become so loosened that he could draw the right hand through the noose.

His greatest fear had been that Bat Goshinsky would examine the cord and tie it tighter. This danger he had escaped, and he expected to escape all the rest when he compressed his right hand into the smallest possible compass and started to draw it through the noose.

It went through all right, and Fred's heart bounded with an immense sense of relief.

To get his jack-knife out of his pocket and do the rest was but the work of a moment, and he sprang down from the shelf and stamped out the crackling fuse.

It was done now, and Fred stood still and listened.

There was not a sound outside, and not a ray of light in the cellar, now that he had extinguished the single glowing spark which marked the position of the fuse.

Fred struck a match and gathered up as many of the cartridges as he could hold in his hand.

He had been in the cellar of the Darlington foundry before, and he knew that away over in one corner there was a spring which came bubbling up into a barrel set in the ground.

Aided by other matches he went over to this barrel and dropped the cartridges into the water, then went back and got the rest and did the same with them.

Then, and not until then, Fred's strength deserted him and he staggered out of the cellar as weak as a child.

But strength was no longer needed.

Fred had done a brave work.

The Darlington foundry was saved for that night, whatever might happen to it later on.

"I must brave up!" muttered the boy. "I must get back to Mr. Ropes, and then for Cranford's to do the best I can."

He went out of the foundry yard by a side entrance, where he thought he would be less likely to run into the strikers, and he was wise in doing so, for there was nobody there, while the main entrance was guarded by two men.

Hurrying back to the station where the team still stood, he could find nobody, and when he peered in through the window he saw that the detective no longer lay upon the floor.

"They have carried him up to the doctor's house, and that shows that he must still be alive," thought Fred. "Well, I can do no more here, and I had better get up to Cranford's just as quick as ever I can."

He was right about the detective. At that very moment Mr. Ropes was lying stretched upon the doctor's lounge, with the doctor working over him, while the friendly watchman, who had assisted in carrying him up from the station, was on his way back to his post.

Fred did not wait for him to come, but started down the road for the house of the ex-iron king.

Good fortune was with him again.

The gang upon which Bat Goshinsky had depended all drank too long in Mugge's saloon up in Hometown, and had delayed their coming.

Bat and his friends were there standing in the woods waiting for them to arrive.

Something had delayed Mat Markham, also, and although the appointed time had come and passed, John Cranford's house stood as dark and deserted as when Fred drove the buggy furiously past its door.

Fred hurried up to the gate, and was about to open it when his former experience was repeated, for a dark figure suddenly stepped out into full view on the other side of the gate, exclaiming, in a whisper:

"Fred French, as I'm a sinner! What on earth brings you here?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ATTACK ON MR. CRANFORD'S HOUSE.

"Tom Daley!" gasped Fred. "Oh, Tom, I'm so glad to see you!"

"Well, then, I'm not at all glad to see you," replied Tom. "This is just about the very worst place you could come to this night, if you only knew it, Fred French. Why in thunder didn't you stay at the cave?"

"It would take a long time to explain that, Tom, and as matters stand I have no time to spare. There's going to be trouble here right away."

"Oh, then you know, do you? Blamed if I can see how you found out. Of course, there is going to be trouble. There's a big gang of strikers on their way here now, and they mean to clean out old man Cranford, though why they should do it I'm sure I can't understand. I came here to warn them, Fred."

"You did? So did I. How in the world did you find out?"

"Oh, I happened to overhear two fellows talking about it in the street to-night just as I was going home from the reading-room. I went home then, and to bed, and thought I wouldn't do anything about it, but to save me I couldn't sleep thinking of it all, so at the risk of getting into trouble I got up and dressed myself and started out, and here I am."

"Hark! I thought I heard some one coming along the road," whispered Fred, lowering his voice.

"It does sound as if a team was coming," replied Tom, "but say, Fred, what are we going to do?"

"Get to the door and ring them up!" exclaimed Fred. "You are sure there's no strikers hanging around here?"

"I haven't seen anybody, but then I have just come."

"Come on, come on!" said Fred. "No, don't ask me to tell you anything about myself yet. I've got so much to tell that I couldn't get through in half an hour. There's going to be trouble here right now, Tom Daley, and we want to head it off if we possibly can. Oh, I am so glad to have your help!"

The boys had reached the front door of the mansion by this time, and Fred gave several vigorous pulls at the bell before he succeeded in attracting the attention of anybody inside.

Then a window on the second floor was raised and a girlish voice called out:

"Who's there?"

"Why, it's Miss Lena herself!" whispered Fred. He ran down the steps and stood in the middle of the gravel walk.

"Miss Cranford, I'm Fred French," he called out. "Don't be frightened, but the strikers are coming here to attack this house. You want to wake up your father right away."

There was a sharp exclamation behind the half-open blind, and then the voice called out:

"I can't see you, and I don't feel sure that you are Fred French. To prove it, tell me what I said to Fred French when I parted with him last evening, and where that parting took place?"

"The parting took place right here at this gate," replied Fred, "and what you said to me was that you would never forget what I had done for you, which, after all, wasn't of much account."

"Wait a moment, I'll be right down," answered the voice, and Fred knew how troubled Lena must feel by the way she spoke.

"Why does she do it all? Why don't her father come?" he said to Tom. "Oh, I do wish I could see the end of this thing!"

They only had to wait a few moments before Lena appeared at the door in a loose wrapper, with her hair hanging down.

"Fred French! So it is you, sure enough!" she exclaimed, for she had lighted the hall gas and it struck full upon the faces of the two boys. "Do you mean to tell me that the strikers are going to attack our house? Why should they do anything of that sort? What has my father ever done to injure these men?"

"I could explain that better to your father himself," replied Fred. "Hadn't you better call him up? This is a very serious business, miss."

"My father is not here," was the reply. "He has gone to Pittsburgh, and, unfortunately, our man is away, too; there is no one in the house but myself, the cook and the chamber-maid. If what you say is true, I can't be too thankful that you have come."

"All that's bad enough," said Fred. "It is true, and it is the work of Mat Markham. I would rather have told your father, but—"

"Why, Mr. Markham is our friend!" cried Lena, blushing. "He visits here frequently, and—"

"And don't you trust him!" broke in Fred, and then, in a few hurried words, he told of the conversation he had overheard.

Lena's eyes flashed fire.

"So that's his game, is it?" she exclaimed. "I won't deny to you now, Fred French, that Mat Markham has proposed to me, and that I rejected him on account of his drinking habits, but I thought he was a young man of honorable intentions at least."

"He's one of the biggest scoundrels that ever went unhung," replied Fred; "but listen, Miss Lena; they are coming now! Don't you hear?"

"That's what they are!" added Tom, for the murmur of voices could be heard up the road, and the heavy tramp of many feet came with the sound.

"What shall we do?" gasped Lena. "You will stand by me, Fred French?"

"Of course I will," replied Fred, "and so will Tom Daley. Can we come in?"

"You must come in! There, lock the door and bolt it! Oh, this is terrible, but you say Mat Markham does not intend that they shall do us any harm? I'm so frightened that I scarcely know what I am saying. Perhaps, after all, it will not be so bad."

"It won't amount to anything if Mat can get them to go away," replied Fred, wondering to himself what Bat Goshinsky was thinking of about that time, for certainly, according to all calculations, the dynamite under the Darlington factory ought to have exploded long ago.

There was no more than time to secure the door and examine the window fastenings upon the lower floor when the mob came up in front of the house.

The moment the leaders reached the gate they threw it open, and, with hoots and yells and cat-calls and wild shouts for the ex-iron king to show himself, they came flocking through the gate into the front yard.

Lena had grown calmer now, but the screams of the cook and chambermaid could be heard upstairs.

"Where's Bat Goshinsky? I don't see anything of him?" demanded Tom Daley, who was peering out between the parlor blind slats.

"He ought to be there, for it's his job," replied Fred. "Here come the stones!"

They came in a perfect shower, rattling against the door and breaking the windows.

"Come out, Cranford! Come out and show yourself! We want to talk to you!" the crowd yelled.

"I'm glad my father isn't here. This would just about kill him!" exclaimed Lena.

"Here comes Mat Markham!" cried Fred, who had stationed himself at the other window.

A road wagon came dashing up in front of the house and halted.

Mat Markham was driving, and as he reined in he called to the mob:

"My friends, what are you doing here? Why do you attack peaceable people at this hour of the night?"

"It's young Markham! It's the iron king!" the mob yelled. Then it was:

"Kill him! Slug him! Down with the iron kings!" and the cries were emphasized by a shower of stones which made Mat dodge and his horse jump about.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ESCAPE.

"Hold on! Hold on, there, boys!" yelled the young iron king. "I'm your friend! You don't understand! Send for Bat Goshinsky! Where's Bat?"

"There's a bat for you!" shouted Long Luke, shying a brick at young Markham's head.

It struck him fair and with fearful force.

The horse, having at last made up its mind what to do, started off at the same instant, and Mat Markham, hurled from the road wagon, fell in the dust and lay there as one dead.

Punishment had followed his treachery, swift and sure.

Still no Bat appeared, and the mob, worked up to the pitch of madness, was making fearful havoc with Mr. Cranford's house.

Shots and stones came in through the windows, and men were dragging old boxes and other rubbish from the barn and piling it all up against the side of the house.

Who was the originator of the evil scheme was never known—certainly it had not been Mat Markham's intention to do anything of this sort—nor did any one ever find out who touched the match to the pile, but somebody did, and in a moment it was all ablaze.

The flames were soon communicated to the house itself, and all the while the mob was hammering away at the door, doing its best to burst it in, but giving the windows, which opened on the piazza, a wide berth, for already three of their number had fallen wounded, brought down by shots from a revolver which Lena Cranford had given to Fred.

Fred was doing his best—doing all he could to "hold the fort."

He heard Mat Markham's shouts for Bat, and he saw the young man thrown out of the buggy.

"It's all up with us, I'm afraid," he said to Lena, "and all my fault, too. Mat has been killed, perhaps, and with Bat Goshinsky away, there is no one to stop them. Sooner or later they are bound to break in."

"How is it your fault?" demanded Lena, who had been trying her best to quiet the frightened servants, who had come downstairs and were screaming in the hall.

"Bat has gone to the foundry to see why there was no explosion. That's certainly what has happened. Oh, I wish those women would stop yelling! What good does it do?"

Another shot came crashing through the window then, narrowly missing Tom.

"Stand back! Stand back out of the way!" cried Fred, but he himself, without the slightest sign of fear, went straight up to the window and fired three shots out into the darkness at the howling mob.

"I smell smoke!" Tom exclaimed.

"So do I," said Lena. "Merciful heaven! have they set the house on fire? Oh, what shall we do?"

"That's just what they have done," said Fred, with a calmness which he was far from feeling. "Miss Cranford, it is no use! We must get out of here if it is a possible thing. The door will be broken in and I can't help it. Is there no way of retreat? No place of safety to which we could take you and those women, while I run into Darlington and try to get help?"

"Why, there is old Mrs. Anderson's cottage in the rear of us here, right across the field," replied Lena. "But, oh, it is terrible to go away and leave everything behind us to be destroyed by these fiends!"

"What else can we do?" said Fred. "It is better to take you away than to have you stay here and fall into their hands. Think! Is there no way of getting out of the house besides the doors? Suppose we try for the side windows."

Mat Markham was having a hard time of it.

Bat Goshinsky was not there to defend him against the mob, and as soon as Mat tried to speak to the half-drunken rabble they, not understanding the situation at all, set upon him with stones and clubs.

The frightened horse backed and plunged, threatening at every instant to throw Mat, who was none too sober, out into the road.

"They are watching there," said Tom. "The smoke is coming in pretty thick, Fred."

"There's the cellar door," said Lena. "It opens right in front of a big syringa bush; we might escape that way."

"We'll try it!" exclaimed Fred. "Has your father any money? Have you any jewelry? Are there any private papers of value that should be saved?"

"You think of everything," said Lena. "Well, we will go. We must. There is no money of any consequence in the house, but there is a box of papers, which my father has always told me to look for in case anything should happen in his absence, and I have jewelry, of course."

"Get them, quick! We haven't a moment to lose!" cried Fred, and Lena flew to obey.

Things were getting pretty hot outside in more senses than one. The crowd was surging this way and that, yelling to each other in Polish, Hungarian and a dozen other strange dialects, for all the boys could tell.

For Fred to fall into their hands would mean nothing short of death, and he knew it perfectly well; yet he stood there talking to Tom as quietly as though there was no danger at all.

"Will she never come!" cried Tom at last, as a great puff of smoke came rolling in through the broken window.

Something worse followed.

There was the crack of a rifle, and suddenly Tom uttered a sharp cry and fell over against Fred.

"I'm shot!" he gasped.

"Where? Where?" cried Fred, supporting him.

"In the shoulder! Oh, get me out of this, quick!"

Lena appeared at the same instant.

No matter what was said and what was done after that, for we must hurry on to other and highly important events.

The cellar was filled with smoke when Fred, supporting Tom, led the way down the steps.

Lena followed, and the cook and chambermaid, huddling close to each other, brought up the rear.

Up the stone steps they groped their way, and paused beneath the cellar door, which Fred cautiously opened.

There was no one in sight. The syringa bush shielded them completely, and without being seen they escaped through the back gate, ran across the field, and took refuge in the cottage of the Widow Anderson, frightening the poor woman almost to death.

Tom Daley collapsed completely as soon as they were safe in the house.

"Get a doctor, Fred! I'm dying, and no mistake!" he cried, and then he fell down upon the floor.

On Lena's account Fred hesitated, but Lena insisted that he should go for the doctor at once.

There was light enough now as the brave foundry boy jumped over the wall and ran down the lane, which took him to the Darlington road.

Over among the trees John Cranford's beautiful mansion was blazing fiercely, and as the flames roiled heavenward Fred could not but think what a wilful waste of property it all was.

"A good man, who never did any harm to anybody, if all accounts are true," muttered the foundry boy.

And then he added:

"I don't know whether Mat Markham is dead or not, but he ought to be, for this is all his work."

CHAPTER XX.

FRED FINDS THE PINKERTON MEN.

Fred met the doctor in the road driving in his buggy.

He saw him coming, and, guessing who it was, stepped out into the road to intercept him.

The doctor was not a little frightened at first, and actually drew a revolver on the boy, but when Fred made him understand who he was and what he wanted, he was civil enough, and although he was out to answer a hurry call from a farmer's wife over in the neighborhood of Hawley, he promised to stop at the Widow Anderson's cottage and have a look at Tom.

Of course, one of Fred's first questions, when he made the doctor understand who he was, was about Detective Ropes.

"He will live," said the doctor. "His skull is fractured, but he will live. He is now in bed in my house."

This was good news, at all events, and Fred's spirits rose.

He did not return to the cottage with the doctor, as he had first intended to do, however, for he had seen something which caused him deep concern.

It was the mob running away from the burning mansion down in the direction of the creek.

"They are going to the foundry," thought Fred. "I must know what it means."

Meanwhile, the fire-bell was ringing over in Darlington, and Fred could hear the engine come tearing along the road.

"Perhaps they'll save the house," he thought. "I'm sure I hope so. I'm going to see what those madmen are up to. Perhaps I can still do something to save the works."

He had a definite reason for the move he was about to make.

He had just heard a train came in from the West, and it occurred to him at once that the wreck might have been cleared away sooner than the station agent had supposed it could be, and that the Pinkerton men might have come in.

Dodging across the road just in time to see the fire company dashing toward the burning house, Fred took a short cut for the station.

Everything was quiet now. The mob was all down in the deep gully through which the creek ran. Fred felt sure that they were making for the foundry, and that meant mischief, of course.

He reached the station all out of breath. As he came along the tracks he saw quite a little crowd of men standing talking together.

The train had pulled out by this time, of course, and Fred's spirits rose still higher. He felt sure that they must be the Pinkerton men, and he was right.

"Are you fellows from Johnstown?" he exclaimed, dashing up to them, all out of breath.

"What's that to you, young fellow?" asked one of the men. "If you have got anything to say, why, out with it. We are not telling our business to strangers, you bet."

"I'm from Detective Ropes!" panted Fred.

"You are, hey?" said the man. "Where's Ropes? Why isn't he here himself?"

"If you are the Pinkerton men he wired for from Hawley, I'll tell you all, but you must let me know that first."

"That's who we are, but who the deuce are you?"

"I'm helping Ropes. I'm the one who sent the telegram. Ropes has been injured. He was attacked by the strikers and had his skull fractured. You want to listen to me. You may be just in time to save the foundry; the mob is coming down the creek to attack it right now!"

This settled it.

"We'll fix them," said the man. "Lead the way, boy. We are here for business. Which way to the foundry—be quick!"

Fred had the detectives on the run in a moment. They were armed with long night-sticks and revolvers, and were a sturdy lot of fellows, numbering twenty all told.

Fred hastily explained all that had happened to the leader as they hurried along.

"Boy, you're a brick!" said the Pinkerton man. "And do you mean to tell me that you are one of the strikers, too?"

"That's what I am."

"Well, you are all right, anyhow. If we find those dynamite cartridges in the water barrel I shall see that Mr. Dathan knows all about this. Here we are. I don't see anybody yet. Never mind, though. They will get a warm reception when they come."

They had reached the foundry yard now. It was dark and deserted, just as Fred had left it. He threw open the door of the office, and there lay the drunken detectives; apparently they had never moved.

"I see," muttered the Pinkerton man. "It's Camally, Tozer and Schmidt. This settles their hash. Who is the other man?"

"The regular watchman of the foundry," said Fred. "Hark! They are coming. Don't you hear?"

"That's what," said the leader, and he immediately began to dispose of his men to what he considered the best advantage.

Some were hidden behind the office, some in the angle of the foundry where it joined with the rolling mills, and the rest in other places.

"I shall have to light right out," said Fred. "I must get back to my friends I told you about."

"No, you don't. You stay right here and see it through," replied the leader. "After we have driven these fellows off I want you to take me to Ropes."

Fred did not like this very well, as may be supposed.

He said nothing, however, but made up his mind that he would seize the first opportunity to get away, being very much worried about Lena and Tom, of course, but now there was nothing to be done but to wait.

"They are coming," said the leader, after a moment, for stealthy footsteps could be heard at the other end of the foundry yard.

"I don't think they are all coming," replied Fred. "There are only two or three coming ahead to see how the land lies."

"If your Bat Goshinsky is one of them I'm going to grab him," said the Pinkerton man. "Look out and see, young fellow; that is, if you can."

Fred peered out from behind the building.

He could see three dark shadows creeping along the yard, but it was impossible to make out who they were.

Suddenly they paused, and a low whistle sounded.

"That's the signal!" breathed the leader. "The fun is going to begin now!"

There was no answer to the whistle for a moment.

The three shadows remained motionless, and then, all at once, as many as twenty lighted lanterns were flashed up in the darkness and a great mob of strikers, with wild shouts and fierce yells, came rushing into the foundry yard.

All of a sudden he threw up his revolver and fired a shot into the air.

This was his signal.

It was acted upon instantly.

Every man of the band sprang from his concealment.

They formed themselves into a solid line as quick as lightning, drew their revolvers and immediately opened fire upon the strikers who, astonished at their sudden appearance, came to a halt.

Fred was right alongside the leader, who took good care not to let him get away.

"Which is Bat Goshinsky?" demanded the Pinkerton man. "Speak quick, boy!"

"That big fellow on the left," said Fred.

The Pinkerton man instantly aimed a shot at Bat, but it was a miss.

"That's for you, Fred French!" shouted Bat, firing at the same time.

This was another miss, happily.

"Come on! Come on! Down with them!" yelled Bat, and there was a general rush.

But the Pinkerton men continued to advance, steadily firing, and their shots did effective work.

Many of the strikers dropped in their tracks, some dead and some wounded, but not a Pinkerton man fell, until suddenly the leader got a shot in the shoulder and dropped.

The mob was just beginning to waver, but this encouraged them, and they rushed upon the detectives, yelling like demons as they came.

Just what happened after that Fred would have found it difficult to describe in detail, for just as the detectives began to fall back he stumbled and fell.

In an instant the strikers were upon him.

Two big Huns seized him and dragged him to one side.

"Hold him! Hold him!" he heard Bat Goshinsky yell. "He is the cause of all this! I'll settle with him later on!"

A fierce fight of several minutes' duration followed, and then the tide of battle turned in favor of the detectives.

Help was coming from the town. Men and boys, many only half dressed, came running down into the foundry yard, and the detectives, rallying, charged again.

This time they were successful.

A moment later and the mob was in full retreat, closely followed by the Pinkerton men.

No such thing had ever been known in Darlington before. The noise and confusion was tremendous.

As for Fred, he was hurried along with the retreating strikers, still firm in the clutches of the two Huns.

They were Darlington men, and strangers to Fred. Neither of them spoke a word of English, but this made no difference as far as Fred was concerned, for he knew perfectly well that any appeal to them would be quite useless.

They seemed to have had special instructions from Bat Goshinsky, for they immediately separated themselves from the mob and ran Fred up the bank out of the gulley, across the road and into the woods just beyond the Cranford house, where they paused.

Through the trees Fred could see the Cranford house. It was still standing, and as near as he could make out the side that he looked at was not burned at all.

The fire was all out, and the engine was just returning to Darlington as they crossed the road.

Now the shouts of the mob began to die away in the distance and presently a shadow glided in among the trees, and Bat Goshinsky appeared before Fred.

"Ah, you snoozer! Ah, you rat! Ah, you dirty scab!" he cried, emphasizing each remark by a blow, taking Fred first on

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTURED.

"That's business!" breathed the Pinkerton man. "Now see me chase those fellows, boy!"

Fred thought to himself that the Pinkerton man had his hands full, but he did not speak. He resolved to keep out of sight if he could, for he knew that it would only make matters worse for him later on if he was to be seen.

The Pinkerton man waited for a moment, though why he did not act at once Fred could not understand.

one side of the head and then on the other. "Wouldn't I like to kill you! Well, well, well!"

"That's all right, Bat. You can kill me if you want to. I'm in your power now," replied Fred, with all the coolness he could assume.

"How did you escape?" demanded Bat. "Was it you who put out that fuse and threw away those cartridges? What sent you up to the Cranford house to warn them? Who brought those detectives into Darlington? Was it you—all you?"

"If you expect me to answer half a hundred question all at once you'll get most beautifully left," said Fred, "and I'm going to make matters easier by not answering any of them—that's me. Make the most of it, Bat."

"All right, Freddy. I will make the most of it," replied Bat. "I know you and you know me. Now, boy, of course you don't expect any mercy at my hands. You are not such a fool as that."

"Indeed I am not. I expect nothing."

"Good! You have put me out of business; you have knocked all my plans into a cocked hat. I would shoot you or stick a knife into you right now if it wasn't for one thing, my boy."

"Perhaps you will tell me what that one thing is when you get good and ready?" retorted Fred. "Well, I can wait. I am in no particular hurry to die."

Bat's answer was to cuff the boy a few times more, and then saying something to the two Huns, he led off among the trees.

Fred was dragged after him, the Huns still keeping that merciless grip on his arms.

When he stumbled, which he did frequently, they jerked him to his feet with fearful force.

But Fred never said a word—not one word.

He had firmly made up his mind that Bat Goshinsky should hear no whines for mercy from him.

Of course, he began to wonder where they were taking him when Bat led off up the side of Green Mountain, and equally, of course, he was most terribly worried about Lena and Tom.

They were far up on the mountainside before Bat halted at a rude hut which stood on a narrow platform of rock, backing against the ledge.

A light burned in the window, and as Bat gave a peculiar knock on the door he turned to Fred and said:

"Walk into my parlor, Freddy. That's what the spider said to the fly, you know, and—ha! ha! ha! the fly never walked out again!"

CHAPTER XXII.

IN BAD HANDS.

Any boy but Fred French would have given up in despair when the door of that lonely hut on the mountain closed behind him and he found himself entirely at the mercy of Bat Goshinsky and the two Huns.

He knew the place now. Behind the hut there was an old deserted quarry which had not been operated for many years.

No spot could be better adapted for dark deeds of crime, for it was a place no one ever came to. It was no wonder that Bat Goshinsky had selected it for his evil work, for here he could feel perfectly secure.

Bat was a thoroughly bad man—probably no worse one existed around Welby and Darlington.

He had committed many crimes in his time, even to being twice under suspicion of murder, yet somehow he always managed to keep out of the meshes of the law.

All this Fred knew, and we only state the truth when we say that the foundry boy had no hope—absolutely none.

There was a blazing fire in the open chimney of the hut, and before it sat Mat Markham with his head tied up, looking about as good-natured as a bear with a sore head.

"So you have got him?" he exclaimed. "Well, I'm blamed glad of it. Good for you, Bat! We can do business now. Say, give me another drink."

Bat took a whisky bottle out of the cupboard and passed it over to him, with a surly caution about drinking too much.

"Oh, stuff that!" growled Mat. "I know how much I can carry, and don't you forget it. Say, did you ever see me when I couldn't carry my load?"

"No, don't know as I ever did, nor I don't want to see you to-night. We haven't got much time left before morning. What's to be done with this boy?"

"Kill him!" growled Mat, spitefully. "Kill him!"

"That sounds well, but how do you want it done? You are bossing this job, you know."

"I am, hey? Well, I wonder! If you had kept your engagements with me I wouldn't be in the fix I am now, and that's right, too. A nice way things have turned out! Here I am with my head cracked and my chances with Lena Cranford all gone. Instead of being able to play the benefactor, the girl has not only slipped through my fingers and gone the deuce knows where, but her house is destroyed, and she looks upon me as the cause of all her troubles. Say, that's all right, isn't it—nit!"

Mat did not seem to care a thing about the presence of Fred, who stood by the door still firm in the clutches of the two Huns.

It was not a favorable sign. It looked as though they meant to kill him.

The conversation turned in that direction now.

"Well," said Bat, "that's something I can't help, and it all came through Fred French, too. I've explained the trick he served me at the foundry. How could I know that he had got on to our scheme about Cranford's? When I found the dynamite didn't explode, and you didn't come, I had to choose between the two things. I thought you had given the job up. I wanted to know what was the matter at the shop, so I just ran down there to have a look. I didn't think they would set the house on fire, and, anyhow, I didn't mean to stay so long."

"Well, that's all right, too," snorted Mat. "It has cost me the girl, though, and came near costing me my life. That brings us back to where we started out. Fred French is responsible for the whole business. What's to be done with him? He must be made to pay for all this. What I want is revenge."

"Take it then!" cried Bat, showing his teeth like some wild animal. "Here we are alone in this hut. These two fellows would no more think of going back on you than they would of cutting off their right hands. Do with the boy just as you please, and when you are through we will throw his body over the rocks here, which will account for his death all right when it comes to be found."

It was a fiendish suggestion made by a fiend, and poor Fred gave himself up for lost.

But Bat Goshinsky was not the only fiend in the hut that night. Mat Markham was another.

Maddened with drink and the desire for revenge, he sprang up from the stool upon which he had been sitting, and fastened his long, sinewy fingers about Fred's throat.

"Send these two fellows outside! Send them away!" he shouted. "I'll kill him! I'll kill him now!"

It was no use to try to resist him, for Mat was the bigger and the stronger, but Fred did try it, just the same.

He struggled for all he was worth, kicking and striking out

wildly, but all to no purpose. Mat's breath came hot against his face, his fingers tightened their grip about his throat. The two Huns ordered out by Bat left the hut, and Bat himself stood over the combatants with his revolver drawn, watching it all with as much interest as if it had been a prize-fight.

It was all over in a few moments.

Worn out by his great exertions and a loss of sleep, Fred could not stand up against Mat Markham.

He collapsed all at once, and went down upon the floor, where he lay like one dead.

"By gracious, you have finished him!" cried Bat.

"That's what I meant to do," replied Mat, fiercely. "Is he dead?"

"Guess he is," replied Bat, bending down over the unconscious boy.

He thought so, but then Bat was half drunk himself; indeed Mat was the more sober of the two.

"Yes, he's dead," he added. "Good enough! Mat Markham, I've got you now!"

"Got me! What do you mean?" cried the young iron king, starting back.

"What do I mean? Why, I mean what I say. You're a murderer. I'm a witness. I may turn informer. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Scoundrel!" cried Mat, putting his hand behind him as though to draw his revolver, and then his face turned pale.

Bat's revolver was already drawn, and he toyed with it carelessly.

"Why don't you draw, my son?" he said. "Why don't you kill me, too?"

"You've picked my pocket!" cried Mat. "You wretch! You have stolen my gun!"

"Of course. Do you think I want to be shot? Oh, no! I looked out for that. Come to terms, Mat! Come to terms, my boy! You have run up against a bad man, and you'll find it out, too."

Mat Markham was as white as a sheet as he dropped back on his stool by the fire.

He buried his face in his hands for a moment, and then said:

"I'm in your power, Bat Goshinsky! Fool that I was to put myself there! What do you want me to do?"

"What you suggested that I should do for you the other night!" hissed Bat, going close up to him, "and after it is done, this strike is to be declared off, and I am to be made the boss of the Welby Iron Works—see?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT WICKED PLOT.

Mat Markham and Bat Goshinsky talked for half an hour in low, earnest tones, indulging in one or two drinks meanwhile.

During all this time the Huns remained outside in the cold, and Fred, the Foundry Boy, lay still upon the floor scarcely daring to breathe.

And if Fred did not dare to breathe then he must have been breathing all the while, of course, and very far from dead.

Such was exactly the case.

Bat Goshinsky was all wrong when he assumed that Fred's mortal career was finished. In fact, he was too drunk to have any clear idea of what he was about.

"Well, we'll go now, my boy," he said at last. "I think we

understand each other pretty well. Might as well be to-night as any other time, I suppose."

"It's all settled," said Mat, gloomily. "No use talking any more about it. What has to be has to be. I say four o'clock."

"Four o'clock let it be, then. That will give you plenty of time to drive across country and get yourself out of the way. You'll show yourself in Pittsburgh freely and come back just as soon as you receive the telegram. As for me, you needn't worry. No one shall suspect me. I shall take care of myself all right."

"And the body here?" muttered Mat, waving his hand at Fred.

"The Huns will take care of that. I'll send them in now."

He gave Fred a savage kick as he spoke, and left the hut, closely followed by Mat Markham, who by this time was so far gone that he found it rather difficult to walk.

The two Huns were not sitting on the rocks just outside the hut, as Bat had expected to find them. He had to hunt for them, for the men, tired of waiting, had wandered away for some little distance.

Bat whistled and called, and in a few moments they came hurrying up.

He spoke a few words to them in their own language, or his, Mat could not tell which, and then led the way down the cliffs, disappearing in the darkness, with the young iron king close at his heels.

Now what Bat Goshinsky told the two Huns the reader can easily divine.

It was simply to take Fred's body and tumble it down over the cliffs in front of the hut.

This they went into the hut with the full intention of doing, but there was a very excellent reason why they could not.

When they came into the hut Fred was no longer there.

The instant the two villains departed Fred scrambled to his feet, softly opened the back window, and dropped out.

Carefully closing the window after him, he crouched down upon the rocks and waited until he heard the two Huns come in.

This was his chance, and he took it. Running around the hut while the Huns were inside, Fred was on his way down the mountain before the stupid fellows could fairly realize that the body they had been told to dispose of was no longer there."

Now our young friend, Fred, the Foundry Boy, had passed through many exciting scenes during the last few days, but never in all his life had he been so excited as he was now.

And no wonder.

He had overheard the details of a most villainous plot—a plot so wicked as to throw all the rest of Mat Markham's plottings into the shade.

Tom Daley was forgotten. Lena Cranford was forgotten. Fred had a work to do, and he meant to do it if it cost him his life; but the question which was worrying him now was a most important one—was there time enough for him to act?

It was now after three o'clock, and four was the hour set for the evil deed.

Once down the mountain Fred made for Darlington, avoiding the road and keeping to the fields.

He was going in the wrong direction, and that was what worried him, for his destination was Welby.

Still he could not hope to walk or run to Welby and get there in any sort of time. His only hope was to find the team which he had left at the station, or to get some other means of conveyance if it was gone.

Fortune favored him, as it always favors those who try to do their best.

The horse and buggy was still standing where he had left it, and there was nobody in sight; but just as Fred was about to unhitch the horse three of the Pinkerton men sprang around the corner of the station.

One was the leader, with his arm in a sling.

"Ha! We've got you now!" he exclaimed. "I knew you would come! Hold on, there. We want you for a witness. You don't get away from us just yet."

Fred's heart sank.

All depended upon the whim or good judgment of this man now.

"Don't interfere with me, mister, for Heaven's sake!" gasped the boy. "Just listen to me! I've got something mighty important to tell."

Now, Mr. Siler, the leader of the Pinkerton party, happened to be a very reasonable man, and a very brave one, too.

As he flashed his lantern into Fred's face he saw the excitement under which he was laboring, and hastily drawing him to one side, he listened to all he had to say.

"Is it true? Can it be true?" he exclaimed. "Boy, if you are fooling me, beware!"

"I'm not! I'm telling you the straight truth," replied Fred. "If you don't believe I am straight, go ask Detective Ropes if he is able to talk. He'll tell you who and what I am."

"Fortunately for you and some other parties that's just what I have done," replied Mr. Siler. "I've seen Ropes, and he's getting along all right. He says you are a little brick, and that he owes his life to you."

"I did my best, and I'm trying to do it still," replied Fred, "but if you hold me here all will be lost."

"I'm not holding you here. I'm going with you," said Mr. Siler, "and three of my men shall follow us right up in a hired team."

It was an immense relief to Fred.

He was so overcome with excitement and fatigue that he reeled and would have fallen if Mr. Siler had not caught hold of him and held him up.

He felt that his troubles were over now, and so they were, as far as getting to Welby was concerned, for inside of two minutes he and Mr. Siler were whirling over the road, but there was the old question of time troubling Fred, for it was now half-past three.

"Brace up, Fred," said the detective, to whom he had freely confided his fears. "Perhaps we shall pass them on the road."

"Will you attempt to take them if you do?" asked Fred, anxiously.

"No indeed. That would spoil it all. Your story would never be believed. We must catch them in the very act."

"Hark! I hear wheels ahead of us now!" breathed Fred. "Perhaps that's Mat Markham's team."

"Keep well back in the buggy and pull your hat over your eyes," said the detective. "Say yes as we pass them if it is."

He applied the whip, and soon they passed a stylish road wagon in which two men were seated, in spite of the vigorous efforts of the young man who was driving to keep the lead.

"Yes," said Fred, as they went whirling by.

It was some little time before the ring was answered, and then a sleepy, half-dressed boy who did chores around the place appeared.

"We must see Mr. Markham at once," said the detective, pushing his way in.

The boy protested that Mr. Markham was sick in bed and could not see anybody, but the detective settled the matter by seizing him by the collar and forcing him to show them to the room of the iron king.

They had left their team at the livery stable, and as the detective took care to lock the front door and put out the hall gas, there was nothing to indicate their presence in the house.

Mr. Markham was awake, and received them in bed in a state of intense nervous excitement.

"So it's you again, Fred French!" he exclaimed. "Why did you run away last night? I believed your story, and would have stood by you. You made a great mistake."

"No mistake at all!" exclaimed the detective, who had already introduced himself. "Listen to this young man, Mr. Markham, and you will thank your stars that he did run away. Summon all your fortitude, sir. The story Fred is about to tell is not a pleasant one to hear."

The old iron king turned deathly pale and feebly held out his withered hands.

"It is about my son! I feel it—I know it. He wishes me dead."

It was worse than that, however.

Mr. Markham hid his face and wept when Fred ceased to speak.

"So it has come to this," he said. "Mat would murder me. Well, I am not surprised. He is thoroughly bad. The law must take its course."

"He must be caught in the act," said Mr. Siler, emphatically. "This is a serious matter. I cannot expect you to believe Fred French unless you have absolute proof."

"You are right," said Mr. Markham. "I shall get up and dress myself. I don't care now whether I die or not. I understand you, sir. I know your plan. It shall be as you wish."

Certainly old Moses Markham showed himself to be a man of great good common sense in those early morning hours.

In spite of the fact that he had actually been told by the doctors that it was not likely he could live a week, he got up, dressed himself, and rendered the detective all the assistance he could.

It was now four o'clock, but nothing had been heard of the road wagon yet.

Fred and the detective both felt sure that Mat would never attempt to drive up to the door, and they were right.

Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes passed, and nothing had occurred yet.

The lights were all out in the big mansion except the night lamp which always burned in Mr. Markham's room, and that was turned down low.

The boy had been sent to bed and told to stay there, but three strange gentlemen who had come whirling up in a wagon had been admitted at a few minutes past four.

At four twenty-five, when all was as still as death in the house, a night-key was heard softly inserted in the latch of the big front door.

Presently the door opened and closed again.

Silence followed for a moment, and then stealthy footsteps were heard on the stairs.

In Mr. Markham's room profound silence reigned.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

A furious ringing at Moses Markham's door bell announced a visitor to the iron king.

The outlines of a man's figure could be seen in the bed. The head was buried deep among the soft pillows, and turned away from the door.

The footsteps draw nearer and nearer.

Two figures came gliding into the room.

Mat Markham was one, Bat Goshinsky the other. Mat softly closed the door behind him, and with a hurried glance at the bed turned his head away.

"I can't do it, Bat! It's no use!" he groaned. "Either you do the job for me, or let it be given up."

"You will do it, young fellow!" hissed Bat. "I'm not to be fooled with. Stop. Think! One blow with this knife makes you heir to a million. Strike that blow or I'll put a ball through your head right here in this room!"

He thrust a long, glittering knife into Mat Markham's hand, at the same time covering him with a revolver, and pushed him toward the bed.

Mat seemed to nerve himself up to the striking point all at once, for he suddenly leaned over the bed with the knife raised, and was just about to strike the fatal blow when Bat gasped out:

"Stop! Fooled! It's only a dummy! This is a trap, sure!"

"Yes, and it's sprung!" cried a deep voice behind him. "Drop that revolver. Hands up, or you are a dead man!"

It was Detective Siler holding a cocked revolver. He had stepped suddenly from behind a curtain, and at the same instant a closet door on the other side of the room was thrown open and old Moses Markham, supported by Fred, the Foundry Boy, stepped out.

"Arrest him!" he cried. "That's my son! Show him no mercy!"

Then throwing his arms around Fred's neck, he exclaimed:

"You—you have saved me! Henceforth you shall be my son!"

* * * * *

The reason Bat Goshinsky did not escape when, defying the detective's threat he fired one shot and made a mad rush for the door, was because the three Pinkerton men were waiting for him in the hall.

They clapped the bracelets on him like lightning, while Mr. Siler did the same for Mat Markham, who fainted dead away.

* * * * *

Our story ends here because the strike ended next day.

Old Moses Markham, defying the doctors, went to his office, summoned the labor leaders, and, recognizing the union, an agreement was entered into in which Mr. Dathan, of Darlington, and all the other iron kings of the region soon after joined.

Within a week everybody was at work again except the Welby soft-shop men, and they had to leave town and seek work elsewhere, for Mr. Markham declared that he would not rebuild the soft shop under a year.

When it was all over the foundrymen began to ask each other if it had paid.

They were out several weeks' wages, and broken contracts had been taken away from the region and sent elsewhere, so for a long while the men only worked about half time.

Everything came right in the end, though, and there has been no trouble around Welby and Darlington since.

Long ago Bat Goshinsky paid the penalty for his many crimes by a life sentence in the Western Penitentiary, where Mat Markham kept him company for ten years.

Tom Daley was not much hurt, and soon recovered. Detective Ropes' recovery was more gradual, but he came out all right in the end.

It was Bat who attacked him on the road, beating him into insensibility with a heavy club.

Mr. Cranford rebuilt his house, and tried his best to make Fred French accept a big reward, Mr. Dathan, of Darlington, trying the same thing.

Fred, however, would not accept a penny, but later Mr. Cranford rewarded the boy by giving him his only daughter as a bride.

And why not?

There was no difference in their stations or their wealth.

Mr. Cranford himself in his younger days had been only a foundry boy, and Fred was now the adopted son of Moses Markham, who lived six years, and when he died he left Fred all his wealth.

Fred was now a millionaire, and lived in the big house with his mother, his sister and his wife.

Some day Mr. Cranford will die and leave Lena another fortune.

Last year Tom Daley was married to Fred's sister. Dora Daley was married to a respectable foundryman long ago.

Tom is superintendent of the Welby works now, and some day will be partner.

Business is good, and Mr. French, the proprietor, is on the best of terms with all his workmen.

He treats them right, and they know it, and what they like best of all about him is that he never holds himself above them, but is ever ready to listen to their grievances, for he cannot forget the days of the great strike when he was nothing but Fred, the Foundry Boy.

Next week's issue will contain "THE WHITE WORLD; OR, THE SLAVES OF SIBERIA." By Howard Austin.

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

SPECIAL NOTICE.—All back numbers of this weekly except the following are in print: 1 to 25, 27, 29 to 36, 38 to 40, 42, 43, 45 to 51, 53 to 60, 62, 64 to 69, 71 to 73, 75, 79, 81, 84 to 86, 88, 89, 91 to 94, 98 to 100, 102, 103, 105, 107 to 111, 116, 119, 122, 124 to 126, 132, 139, 140, 143, 163, 166, 171, 174, 178 to 181, 184, 186, 192, 200, 212, 213, 215, 216, 233, 239, 247, 257, 265, 268, 272, 277, 294. If you cannot obtain the ones you want from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by mail to FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 168 WEST 23D STREET, New York City, and you will receive the copies you order by return mail.

MAKE OR BREAK.

By Horace Appleton.

Some years ago Bishop Jarvis was one of the best known sporting men in the Southern land. He had many friends and some bitter enemies, and when misfortune overtook him on the race course, the latter crowed a good deal, but not in his hearing, as he was known to be a dead shot, while he never forgot an insult or an injury.

He was a widower of forty at the time when misfortune was getting the best of him, and the only one in the world that he had to care for was his daughter, Flora, a young girl of sixteen, who was attending a boarding school near the city of Nashville, Tennessee.

A few years before Bishop Jarvis had a splendid lot of race horses, and he was very successful with them for a time; but when luck went against him he lost heavily, and he had to sell his horses until only two were left.

They were good ones, however, and they were both entered for important races which were to come off at Nashville on the following day.

On the night before the races, while he was walking through the square in Nashville, his trainer came to him in an excited state, saying:

"I am sorry to tell you, sir, that Blackbird has fallen badly lame this evening, and it will be impossible for him to run the race to-morrow."

"Hang the luck! I wouldn't be surprised if Trojan failed me to-morrow also."

"I don't think that, sir, as the bay horse is in splendid form to-night, and he is fit to run for a fortune."

"Then he will have to run for a fortune, as I will take the odds against him for all I can raise. Look out for Jackson and see that he does not fail me, as he is the only one we can depend on to ride Trojan."

The Jackson spoken of was a clever little negro who had been riding for Bishop Jarvis for the past two years, and who was the only one who was supposed to be able to handle Trojan in the great race to take place to-morrow.

On entering the saloon, which was the resort of gamblers and others of the racing fraternity, Bishop Jarvis found that they were already acquainted with the fact that Blackbird had fallen lame, while they offered large bets against his other horse at long odds.

One man who had been his rival for some time, and who was called Hiram Young, went so far as to offer fifteen to one against Trojan in a very bantering manner.

Hiram Young had reason to hate Bishop Jarvis, as they had been engaged in a quarrel three years before, when Young received a wound in his left leg which lamed him for life, and he was known to vow he would follow up his rival until he made a beggar of him.

Bishop Jarvis had already wagered heavily on Trojan and the other horse, but he had still ten thousand dollars in his pocket, which he hesitated to risk until spurred on by the taunts of his rival.

After he had bet his last dollar and while he was talking with one of his friends, a black boy entered the saloon and handed him a small note without saying a word.

The man opened the note and read the following words:

"Follow the bearer, as he has important news for you." Bishop Jarvis crushed the note in his hand, thrust it in his pocket and then glanced after the colored boy who was leaving the saloon at the moment.

Apologizing to his friends, he followed the boy out, and he saw him walking rapidly in the direction of the bridge.

The boy stopped in the middle of the bridge, looking carefully around as the man approached him, as if to note that no one could overhear them.

The boy said in familiar tones: "I hope you did not know me, sir?"

The man recognized the voice on the instant, and he stared at the black face in surprise as he inquired:

"Why, Pete, you rascal, what do you mean by blacking yourself up as a nigger?"

"I blacked myself up, sir, because I didn't want any one to recognize me. Did you see Simpson this evening?"

"Yes; he was with me a while ago to tell me that Blackbird has gone lame."

"Didn't he tell you any other bad news, sir?"

"What in thunder other bad news could he tell me?"

"Perhaps he doesn't know it, sir, but I can tell you that Jackson has been bribed and sent away North this evening so that he can't ride Trojan for you to-morrow. There is a conspiracy against you, Mr. Jarvis, and Mr. Hiram Young is responsible for it."

"Jackson gone North! If it is true I am ruined, as no one else can ride Trojan."

"It is true, sir," rejoined Pete Gray, "but I think somebody else can ride Trojan to win for you to-morrow."

"Who can do it?"

"I will try it, sir, if you will trust me."

"You ride Trojan? Why, you haven't strength enough to guide him around the track, you poor little critter, and I never knew you could ride."

Pete Gray was a poor white boy whom Bishop Jarvis had picked up in New Orleans three years before.

"Tell me what you know about this plot, and let me know if Simpson, the trainer, is in it also."

"Simpson is not in it, sir. I found out all about it an hour ago down at Smoky Hollow, and I am certain that Jackson is now on the way to Louisville with a thousand dollars in his pocket, given him by Mr. Hiram Young. It was his son who put up the job with Jackson, and who is to ride their gray horse Broncho to-morrow. They were afraid of Trojan with Jackson on him."

"Did you ever ride the horse, boy?"

"Several times, sir, and I am almost certain that I can win with him if I can keep him to his work at the close of the second mile."

"You have not the strength to manage the horse if he sulks in the last of the race, and I dare not trust you."

The delicate lad before him grasped his hand, and the man could see tears glistening in his eyes, as he said:

"Oh, Mr. Jarvis, you were always good to me, and so was your little lady of a daughter. Trust me to ride the horse, and I will win for you or die. It is better to trust to me than to a stranger, as you may depend on me to the death, while any stranger may be bought up by your enemy, who swore to beggar you before he got through with you, as you may have heard."

"I have heard it, my boy. Hiram Young has been fol-

lowing me up for some time, and he is now trying to give me a final blow. But I will trust to you and defy him. You shall ride Trojan to-morrow, and if you win for me I will grant you any favor you may ask for years to come.

Great was the excitement at the race course when it was announced that Bishop Jarvis was left in the lurch on account of his black rider running away, and that he could not find any one to ride the tricky Trojan.

The desperate man then blamed himself for not having retained his money until that moment, as still greater odds were offered against his horse, and he turned away to his stable as he muttered aloud:

"Hang it all, if I had only kept my money until now I could have taken the great odds offered, and I stand just the same chance to win."

At that moment some one tapped him on the shoulder and Pete Gray whispered to him in subdued tones, saying:

"Excuse me, Mr. Jarvis, but I have some money I saved, and I would be only too glad to loan it to you to bet on the horse," and as the boy spoke he shoved an envelope into his master's hand and then ran away into the stable to dress for the race.

When Bishop Jarvis counted the money he was surprised to find over two thousand dollars in banknotes, and he muttered to himself, saying:

"How in the mischief could the boy have made so much? I should be ashamed of myself for taking it from him, but something whispers to me to trust to him, and it will be make or break for us all."

When the pale-faced boy rode out on the horse soon after bets of forty to one were offered against him, and Bishop Jarvis risked the money given to him by the young fellow at the odds thus offered.

The horses came together for a splendid start, and away they went in a bunch, with Trojan in the rear.

They kept pretty well together for the first mile, the delicate boy still keeping Trojan in the rear and reserving all his strength for a grand effort at the end of the struggle. Then Broncho cut out the pace as his rider took him to the front, and kept him along at a rattling gait until they were within half a mile of the finishing post.

Pete Gray then pushed Trojan along for the first time, and the brave boy bit his lips as he said to himself:

"Now it is make or break with me, and I'll win the race or die for dear Flora's sake."

Trojan answered well to the call made on him, and away he flew past the other four horses and up to Broncho, while shouts of joy and rage burst out from the spectators, as many feared that they would lose their money on the favorite.

They kept on together for about a quarter of a mile, with Trojan slightly in the lead, when Hiram Young sank his spurs into Broncho's side, and urged him on at a furious pace.

At that moment Pete Gray felt the tricky horse sulking under him, and his rival flew by him with a triumphant smile on his face.

Pete's face was as pale as death, indeed, as he raised his whip and struck the horse under him with all his might, biting his lips at the same time. After striking the horse several blows he sank his spurs into his side and bent for-

ward over his neck as if to push him on, as he yelled into his ear:

"Go it, good Trojan, and we will win the race or die in the trying!"

There was one wild rush for the winning post, a tremendous shout burst from the spectators, and then the two horses dashed in very close together, but Trojan was a full neck in advance as they swept by the judges' stand.

Pete Gray staggered to the scales supported by Bishop Jarvis, who pressed his hand as he whispered to him:

"My brave boy, you have made me to-day, and I will never forget you for it!"

The delicate boy had scarcely retired from the scales, and he was staggering across the track, when a young girl sprang at him and flung her arms around his neck, crying:

"You dear, good fellow, I knew you would not lose the race."

Pete Gray attempted to grasp the young lady's hand, but he staggered and fell heavily to the ground with the blood gushing from his mouth and nose.

The brave fellow had burst a blood vessel. The best doctors in the city were employed to wait on him and Flora Jarvis insisted on nursing him herself in her father's house.

Pete Gray lived for some months, struggling between life and death, and when he did gain a little strength he was removed to Florida by his good friends.

Bishop Jarvis sold his horses and gave up racing when he removed to Florida, where he settled with his daughter and Pete Gray on an orange plantation.

The delicate lad grew stronger day by day in the pleasant Southern home, and when he was a little over twenty-one he married the daughter of the man whose fortune he had made in that desperate race.

German scientists have made a rather remarkable discovery in relation to the cure of common warts. By means of various experiments the X-ray was finally resorted to, and the patients were soon cured of the unpleasant growths. Further experiments made it clear that it was the X-ray alone that cured the warts—that is, that caused them to entirely disappear. A very attractive young woman was nearly heartbroken over the fact that numerous warts appeared upon both hands, especially around the knuckles. She tried scores of so-called "cures," from ancient "voodoo" methods to modern acids and the knife, all without success. In some instances the warts would be greatly reduced, some of them nearly disappeared, as with the knife, but they all speedily grew out again. The young lady appealed to a noted German scientist at just about the time it was believed the X-ray had a destroying effect upon warts. He did not dare use drastic measures, because the warts were about the finger joints and might result in deforming the hand. He tried the X-ray and was delighted to note that the warts were disappearing. Probably the most remarkable feature was that he used the X-ray on the right hand only, yet the warts on both hands began to disappear, and they left both hands at the same time. Since then there have been no signs of more warts, and the young woman's hands are now as smooth and shapely as though she had never seen a wart.

MYSTERIOUS SKULL.



Shines in the dark. The most frightful ghost ever shown. A more startling effect could not be found. Not only will it afford tremendous amusement, but it is guaranteed to scare away burglars, bill collectors, and book agents. It cannot get out of order and can be used repeatedly. Price, 4x5 inches, 15c.; by mail.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

CACHOO OR SNEEZING POWDER.



The greatest fun-maker of them all. A small amount of this powder, when blown in a room, will cause everyone to sneeze without anyone knowing where it comes from. It is very light, will float in the air for some time, and penetrate every neck and corner of a room. It is perfectly harmless. Cachoo is put up in bottles, and one bottle contains enough to be used from 10 to 15 times. Price, by mail, 10c. each; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

JUMPING JACK PENCIL.

This pencil is made up in handsome style and looks so inviting that every one will want to look at it. The natural thing to do is to write with it, and just as soon as your friend tries to write, the entire inside of the pencil flies back like a jumping jack, and "Mr. Nosy" will be frightened stiff. It is one of our best pencil tricks and you will have a hard job trying to keep it. Your friends will try to take it from you. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. each.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

NEW SURPRISE NOVELTY.



Foxy Grandpa, Mr. Peewee and other comical faces artistically colored, to which is attached a long rubber tube, connected with a rubber ball, which can be filled with water, the rubber ball being carried in the pocket, a slight pressure on the bulb causes a long stream, the result can easily be seen.

Price, 15c., Postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

GOOD LUCK BANKS.



Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nickelized brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watchcharm. Money refunded if not satisfied. Price, 10c. by mail.

L. Benarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

IMITATION CIGAR BUTT.

It is made of a composition, exactly resembling a lighted cigar. The white ashes at the end and the imitation of tobacco-leaf being perfect. You can carelessly place it on top of the tablecloth or any other expensive piece of furniture, and await the result. After they see the joke everybody will have a good laugh. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

AUTOMATIC COPYING PENCIL.

The importance of carrying a good reliable pencil need not be dwelt upon here. It is an absolute necessity with us all. The holder of this pencil is beautifully nickelized with grooved box-wood handle, giving a firm grip in writing; the pencil automatically supplies the lead as needed while a box of these long leads are given with each pencil. The writing of this pencil is indelible the same as ink, and thus can be used in writing letters, addressing envelopes, etc. Bills of account or invoices made out with this pencil can be copied the same as if copying ink was used. It is the handiest pencil on the market; you do not require a knife to keep it sharp; it is ever ready, ever safe, and just the thing to carry.

Price of pencil, with box of leads complete, only 10c.; 3 for 25c.; one dozen 30c. postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

TRICK MATCHES.



Consist of a Swedish safety box, filled with matches, which will not light. Just the thing to cure the match borrowing habit. Price, 5c., postpaid.

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POCKET SAVINGS BANK.



A perfect little bank, handsomely nickel plated. Holds just five dollars (50 dimes). It cannot be opened until the bank is full, when it can be readily emptied and relocked, ready to be again refilled. Every parent should see that their children have a small savings bank, as the early habit of saving their dimes is of the greatest importance. Habits formed in early life are seldom forgotten in later years. Price of this little bank, 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

TRICK CUP.



Made of natural white wood turned, with two compartments; a round, black ball fits on those compartments; the other is a stationary ball. By a little practice you make the black ball vanish; a great trick novelty and immense seller.

Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE AUTOPHONE.



A small musical instrument that produces very sweet musical notes by placing it between the lips with the tongue over the edge, and blowing gently into the instrument. The notes produced are not unlike those of the fife and flute. We send full printed instructions whereby anyone can play anything they can hum, whistle or sing, with very little practice. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

MAGIC PIPE.



Made of a regular corn-cob pipe, with rubber figures inside; by blowing through the stem the figure will jump out. Made in following figures: rabbits, donkeys, cats, chickens, etc.

Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

MAGIC MIRROR.



Fat and lean funny faces. By looking in these mirrors upright your features become narrow and elongated. Look into it sidewise and your phiz broadens out in the most comical manner. Size 3 1/4x2 1/4 inches, in a handsome imitation morocco case.

Price, 10c. each, postpaid.

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THE CANADIAN WONDER CARD TRICK.



Astonishing, wonderful, and perplexing! Have you seen them? Any child can work them, and yet, what they do is so amusing that the sharpest people on earth are fooled. We cannot tell you what they do, or others would get next and spoil the fun. Just get a set and read the directions. The results will startle your friends and utterly mystify them. A genuine good thing if you wish to have no end of amusement.

Price by mail, 10c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

PICTURE POSTALS.



They consist of Jungle sets, Map, and Seal of States, Good Luck cards, Comics, with witty sayings and funny pictures, cards showing celebrated persons' buildings, etc. In fact, there is such a great variety that it is not possible to describe them here. They are beautifully embossed in exquisite colors, some with glazed surfaces, and others in matt. Absolutely the handsomest cards issued.

Price 15c. for 25 cards by mail.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

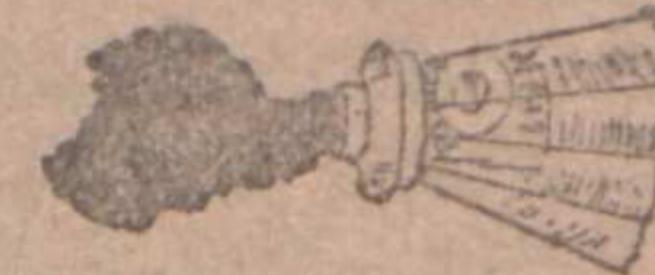
STAR AND CRESCENT PUZZLE.



The puzzle is to separate the one star from the linked star and crescent without using force. Price by mail, postpaid 10c.; 3 for 25c.

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Fool Your Friends—The greatest novelty of the age! Have a joke which makes everybody laugh. More fun than any other novelty that

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ELECTRIC PUSH BUTTON.—The base is made of maple, and the center piece of black walnut, the whole thing about 1 1/4 inches in diameter, with a metal hook on the back so that it may be slipped over edge of the vest pocket. Expose to view your New Electric Bell, when your friend will

push the button expecting to hear it ring. As soon as he touches it, you will see some of the liveliest dancing you ever witnessed. The Electric Button is heavily charged and will give a smart shock when the button is pushed.

Price 10c., by mail, postpaid.

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SNAKE IN THE CAMERA.



To all appearances this little startler is a nice looking camera. The proper way to use it is to tell your friends you are going to take their pictures. Of course they are tickled, for nearly everybody wants to

pose for a photograph. You arrange them in a group, fuss around a little bit, aim your camera at them, and request the ladies to look pleasant. As soon as they are smiling and trying to appear beautiful, press the spring in your camera. Imagine the yell when a huge snake jumps out into the crowd. Guaranteed to take the swelling out of any one's head at the first shot.

Price 35 cents, by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE MAGIC DAGGER.



A wonderful illusion. To all appearances it is an ordinary dagger which you can flourish around in your hand

and suddenly state that you think you have lived long enough and had better commit suicide, at the same time plunging the dagger up to the hilt into your breast or side, or you can pretend to stab a friend or acquaintance. Of course your friend or yourself are not injured in the least, but the deception is perfect and will startle all who see it.

Price, 10c., or 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

THE MAGIC CARD BOX.



One of the best and cheapest tricks for giving parlor or stage exhibitions. The trick is performed as follows: You request any two persons in your audience to each select a card from an ordinary pack of cards, you then produce a small handsome box made to imitate pebbled leather, which anyone may examine as closely as they will. You now ask one of the two who have selected cards to place his or her card inside the box, which being done, the lid is shut, and the box placed on the table. You then state that you will cause the cards to disappear and upon opening the box the card has vanished and the box found empty. The other card is now placed in the box; the lid is again closed and when the box is opened the first card appears as strangely as it went. Other tricks can be performed in various ways. You may cause several cards to disappear after they are placed in the box, and then you can cause them all to appear at once. You may tear a card up, place it in the box, and on lifting the cover it will be found whole and entire. In fact, nearly every trick of appearance and disappearance can be done with the Magic Card Box. Full printed instructions, by which anyone can perform the different tricks, sent with each box.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, JANUARY 29, 1913.

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BRIEF, BUT POINTED.

The river Orinoco, in South America, has more tributaries than any other river. The total number is put at 2,500, including 436 large streams.

Only a saucer remains of the porcelain set presented in 1783 to Martha Washington. This is carefully preserved in the Smithsonian Institution at Washington.

The soles of boots and shoes may be made waterproof by standing them for twenty-four hours in a dish containing a little boiled linseed oil. This should not reach the uppers.

Short postage on letters and advertising matter sent from this country to Colombia is so common that a business man in Bogota declares he has been obliged, in a single year, to pay nearly sixty dollars on such underpaid missives.

The consumption of cigarettes in Germany has increased one hundred per cent. in the last four years. The value of cigarettes smoked last year was \$60,000,000. Each cigarette smoker consumes 1,200 a year. Restricted legislation is pending.

The mystery of the rain trees of the Canaries is the clouds which hover about them constantly; those are constantly sending down water, which saturates the leaves, and falling from them in constant drops, keeps the cisterns which are in excavations beneath them always full of water.

George Cumberland saw the famous giant Obrian Boro in the Strand in London in 1784, and in "The Cumberland Letters," edited by Clementina Black, gives this note on him: "His hand, from the ball of his thumb, actually measures eleven inches and a half and is large in proportion. When I stood up I could just with my forefinger touch the bottom of his chin—in a word, he is eight feet three inches high, and his bones are in proportion large—but the poor soul seems to be dying for want of air and exercise. He is nineteen years of age and expects to be nine feet high."

An execution in Siam is an extraordinary business, according to a correspondent of the *Chronique Medicale*. The doomed man, awakened at dawn, is led in chains to the temple, where candles are lit around him. He is exhorted to think of nothing, to disassociate his mind from mundane affairs and is given the best meal of his life, the menu being carefully chosen according to the social status of the criminal. There are two executioners. One is hidden in some brushwood, while the other, dressed in vivid red, conducts the criminal to the place of sacrifice, bidding him be seated on banana leaves, "in order to be entirely separated from earth." The condemned man is then put into position, awaiting the axe. Earth is put in his ears. For two hours or more nothing happens. Siamese law demands that the criminal bow his head voluntarily to the axe. This he does finally from sheer exhaustion, and immediately headsman No. 2 rushes from his hiding place and does the rest. The executioners are then sprayed with holy water and otherwise purified from contact with the victim's soul.

JOKES AND JESTS.

"How would you classify a telephone girl?" asked the old fogey. "Is hers a business or a profession?" "Neither," replied the boob. "It is a calling."

Mrs. Knicker—Did you tell your husband you needed furs? Mrs. Bocker—Yes; he said he couldn't afford anything but the skin of a Welsh rabbit.

Old Jones—Can you give my daughter the luxuries to which she has been accustomed? Cholly (engaged)—Not much longer. That's why I want to get married.

Mrs. Muggins—I hear your husband is quite versatile. Mrs. Buggins—Why, he can actually stay out late every night in the week and not give the same excuse twice.

Husband—I won't say marriage is a failure, but some are more fortunate in what they get than others. Wife—You are quite right, dear; for instance, you got me, but I—got only you.

"We must reckon with the tillers of the soil," exclaimed the political orator. "What are the farmers going to do this year?" "The summer boarders, as usual," replied a voice from the outskirts of the crowd.

The kindly old lady from the country had purchased a pair of gloves in a department store. "Cash!" shouted the saleslady. "My land!" exclaimed the old lady, fumbling in her valise, "I'll give it to you just as soon as I find my pocketbook."

The Jolly Fellow (to the man above, who has been dragged from his bed by the wild ringing of his front-door bell)—One of your windows is wide open. Mr. Dressing Gown—Thanks, awfully, old man. Which one is it? The Jolly Fellow—The one you have your head out of. Ta-ta!"

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